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AN

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

CIVIL WAR

IN

THE VENDÉE,

FROM ITS ORIGIN TO

THE PEACE CONCLUDED AT LA JAUNAIE:

Translated from the French of

P. Y. J. BERTHRE DE BOURNISEAUX,  
(OF THOUARS)

Member of the Free Society of Belles Lettres and Arts of Paris,  
of the Literary Society of the Two Sèvres, etc.

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PARIS:

PRINTED BY J. SMITH, AT THE ENGLISH PRESS

RUE VAUGIRARD, N°. 939.

1802.

CHANNEL

D. OF THE

THE FORTIFED COASTS

AND

LOWER LOIRE

LOIRE

MAP

of the

DÉPARTEMENTS FORMING THE SEAT

of the

CIVIL WAR IN THE VENDEE

French leagues as to a Degree

Myriamètres

INER OF OLEON

CHARENTE





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# DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO THE

## V E N D É E.

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O THOU ! whom Monsters have overwhelmed with ruin, laid waste and covered with ashes ! melancholy victim of mad passions ! unfortunate Vendée ! accept this tribute of regard from one of your children : there are enough who lavishly offer incense to men in power ; for me, oh ! my Country, it is to misfortune only, it is to thee alone, that I wish to devote my feeble talents,

my watchful hours, and my best affections. May the enthusiasm which inspires me, electrify every heart, and call forth tears, such as I have shed at the sight of those devouring flames that preyed upon thy bosom ! May a regenerating Government cast one look of pity on thee ! May it view thee as I do, loaded with the gifts of nature, but despised of men ; surrounded by seas, streams, and rivers, but destitute of canals, without inland navigation, high roads, or any means of exportation for thy produce ; situated in the midst of a most fertile country, but wanting channels of commercial communication, a common centre, and even towns ; resembling, in short, a great body covered with veins, but without a heart !

Oh

Oh my Country! I am perhaps deceiving myself with vain hopes; but methinks a bright day at length dawns upon thy desolated plains; that Government which has given peace to Europe, which has restored to thee the religious worship of thy ancestors and those altars, in defence of which thou hast shed thy blood, will be able to rouse thee from the melancholy apathy in which thou art sunk, and give thee a new political existence.

May this delightful hope be speedily confirmed! May my feeble voice hasten the moment of its accomplishment! Unhappy Vendée, how disinterested are the sentiments by which I am guided towards thee, and the affectionate share which I take in thy misfortunes! I neither seek places, reputation, riches, nor even that kind of celebrity

lebrity which is acquired by pleading for the wretched; my only wish is to see thy ruins repaired, and thy wounds healed once more; thy prosperity will be mine, and my sweetest reward; in a word, Oh! my Country, I can be happy only in thy welfare.

PREFACE

# P R E F A C E.

---

THERE are few States in Europe that at different periods have not been a prey to the fury of civil war. Without going further back than the age of Charlemagne, what blood has been shed in Europe, by fatal intestine disputes ! Italy and Germany probably feel to this day the havoc and the destructive struggles of the Guelphs and Gibelines ; England, the bloody contests between the houses of York and Lancaster ; Sweden, the wars of Christiern and Vasa ; and Spain the funeral piles and scaffolds which she so long erected in Flanders and in Holland. What has been the result of so many terrible shocks to these different nations ? a general decline in every branch of the body politic. The decay of agriculture has been necessarily accompanied by that of population ; and liberal ideas, national spirit,



spirit, and patriotism, the vital strength of a nation, have gradually disappeared. If we cast a single glance upon the state of modern Europe, we shall easily perceive that Italy is now nothing more than a mere skeleton decorated with an empty name ; that Germany has lost more than one half of that numerous population, which maintained its independence against all the efforts of the Romans ; that England is now only another modern Carthage, obliged to pay mercenaries for her defence ; that Sweden has a very precarious existence, and that Spain is reduced to depend for her defence on the magnanimity of her allies.

Although France has had less to complain of intestine divisions than her neighbours, she has nevertheless been frequently on the point of expiring under the cruel wounds received in the course of her civil wars.

The cradle of the monarchy was stained with the blood which the animosity of the children

children of Clovis on the one hand, and the ambition of the mayors of the palace and the weakness of the last Mærovingian kings on the other, caused to flow. The Feudal Government speedily succeeded this anarchy, the state was divided into as many parties as there were lords and castles, and the first kings of the Capet race were reduced to be mere spectators of the fury of their subjects. Louis-le-Gros and some of his successors attempted in vain to check the progress of these disorders; the fatal rivalships of the Plantagenets and the race of Valois, gave France no time to revive after so many misfortunes; its blood ran in torrents, and notwithstanding all the exertions of the greatest of her Kings, Charles the Wise, the factions of the Armagnacs and the Burgundians soon exhausted the remaining strength of the country. It was less to the genius of Charles the VIIth than to the diversions which the red and white roses occasioned in England, that France was indebted for her safety; never was she so near being shipwrecked. The calm, how-

ever, which the country then experienced was only of very short duration: scarcely had a century elapsed when all its wounds broke out afresh. A religious mania suddenly seized the majority of the French nation. The ambitious great assumed a respectable mask, and whilst the people were murdering each other for differences of opinion, hypocrites contested for the honor of holding the bloody reins of the state. These deplorable troubles calmed by Henry, were entirely appeased by Richelieu. Under his successor, discord again reared its standard, but France was wearied with so many successive shocks: the faction of Fronde and its King of the Halls became the subjects of ridicule; the firm and severe Government of Lewis the XIVth again restored order in the state.

The springs of Government, were however soon relaxed again under the reign of his selfish and intemperate successor; the throne, defiled by prostitution, lost its ancient majesty, and became in the eyes of the people  
nothing

nothing but an empty shadow ; the unfortunate Lewis the XVIth fell, under the stroke of a daring party, and expiated the crimes of his predecessors. France, although undeceived with respect to her Kings, viewed with compassion a Prince, more unfortunate than guilty, tumbled headless from a throne. In many provinces, pity took place of the sentiments of revenge and indignation. The noble enthusiasm of 1789, was almost extinguished, no remains of it were found except in the army ; factious men by the aid of the magic words of liberty and patriotisim, had got possession of power, and France, plunged in a deluge of blood and carnage, became an arena in which ruffians disputed the spoils of its best citizens, and every part of the body politic was in a state of suffering, when to the horrors of foreign hostility was added the scourge of civil war. In my Introduction I shall point out the causes of that lamentable contest which often brought to the very brink of ruin that formidable Republic, now re-established upon its firmest

basis, and in some measure rendered immortal by the genius of a protecting Hero! As a spectator and witness of the reciprocal fury of the contending parties, I venture to flatter myself, that my testimony will not be questioned. I relate what I saw and heard.

—— Quæque ipse miserrima vidi.

By the light of the flames which surrounded me on every side, and were consuming the unhappy Vendée, I ventured to write its History; the tumult of battle and the accents of death often struck my ear, whilst I was writing, and interrupted the thread of my narrative. The reader will easily perceive in perusing this work, the various movements of terror, pity and indignation, which agitated my mind in those terrible moments; but if it was impossible for me amidst the horrors and assassinations which desolated my country to keep my mind in a state of perfect tranquillity, I am not afraid of being accused of having written its History with partiality. I here declare by every thing  
most



most sacred among men, that no sentiment unworthy of a liberal mind, or any private views, have guided my pen. One thought alone occupied my mind, engaged in writing this Sketch; namely, that an historian who feels all the dignity of his functions, ought rather to sacrifice his life than deceive posterity.

*Vitam impendere vero.*

I have passed slightly over the mutual cruelties committed on both sides, persuaded that it was useless to terrify our descendants with the narrative of our crimes.

I foresee that some eye witnesses will accuse me of having omitted interesting particulars of the different battles which I have described: others may pretend that I have confounded dates, and events: I shall answer to these objections; that my descriptions of battles are founded upon the official reports which I procured at the time, both from the Republicans and the Vendéans,

deans, and to which I have added the testimonies of well informed friends, who had been actors or spectators of those scenes. Any man, who after having been present at a battle, pretends to know all its details, is a presumptuous character to whom I have nothing to reply. Let a hundred officers be interrogated respecting the causes which decided the victory of Mans, let their testimonies be compared, and the reader will be convinced the truth of what I advance. Let then even the witnesses of these events beware of saying, that "the Historian is mistaken," till they have reflected and examined if they may not be themselves in error.

My Historical Sketch begins at the period of 1792, and finishes at the general pacification of 1795. I did not think it necessary to write the History of the Troubles of the Vendée during the seventh year. The symptoms of that fresh explosion, indeed, made their appearance under a tremendous aspect,  
and

and the consequences of that appeal to arms, might have become fatal ; but the immortal day of the 18th Brumaire, by overturning an 'oppressive Government, calmed all factions, and united all parties. This last insurrection did not, therefore, give rise to any important event, except the battle of Aubiers, which was gained by the commander of batallion, Hardouin, and by the steadiness of Captain La Vigne. That brave officer, intrenched three days in the Church of Aubiers, with two hundred men, resisted the efforts of a whole army, and gave Hardouin time to come to his relief. The names of these two men will long be dear to the proprietors in the Vendée ; they will never forget the important services rendered them by those officers, who prevented the return of civil war, and thereby rescued their property from fresh devastation and horrors of every kind.



## INTRODUCTION.

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FRANCE, on the death of Lewis the XVth, presented an alarming appearance to the world. The disgraceful close of that reign had entirely overcast the splendour of its auspicious commencement ; the Monarchy had in some measure grown old with the Monarch ; and the body politic seemed to partake of the decrepitude of the head of the State. An exhausted population, deranged finances, corrupted and immoral ministers, wars undertaken with levity, and conducted with folly and weakness, a ruined navy, a discontented army, powerful enemies, shameful treaties of peace, ruinous and disgraceful cessions of territories in the new world ; in short, a universally prevailing egotism, all presented to the discerning

c

cerning mind, the symptoms of a dreadful revolution, and the appearance of a State verging to its ruin.

In the midst of this deplorable confusion, what principally struck judicious observers, was, the general corruption of manners. Prostitution was become the idol of the court, and the people were alike prostituted. Good faith, justice, morality, and almost all the social virtues had disappeared from the French territory, and the vilest libertinism had taken place of the austere manners of the Gauls and the Franks. Seated upon that throne which the Charlemagnes and the Philips had rendered illustrious, the infamous Du Barry, proud of her ascendancy over the decayed Monarch, gave laws imperiously to a degenerated people. Places and honours were all put into the hands of brokers, every thing was sold at court ; every employment had its regulated price, virtue alone was accounted nothing ; and instead of the Barres, the Tristans, the Montignys

tignys, who formerly were the ornaments of the court of Philip Augustus, that of Lewis was the picture of a Dionysius surrounded by the vilest flatterers.

Lewis the XVIth began his reign, and the simplicity of his manners checked for a moment the general corruption. A virtuous citizen, but a weak king; with the candour of the son of Charlemagne, without possessing his courage; what dyke could he oppose to the licentious torrent of the age! His good intentions availed nothing against the universal depravity: though an economical Prince, he could not prevent depredations upon the finances; and though zealous in favour of purity of morals, all his efforts for their reformation only rendered him the derision of the court; religious himself, he had the misfortune to see atheism making fresh progress, and effacing in the hearts of the people every sentiment of respect for the moral virtues; upon the whole,



Lewis the XVIth was born to disprove that celebrated proverb :

*Regis ad exemplar totus componitur orbis.*

If this Prince had attempted to stop the progress of the revolution, it is easy to conceive that his efforts would have been fruitless. Such an undertaking required talents of the first magnitude, and Lewis did not possess those talents ; unable to stop the rapidity of the revolution which was sapping his throne to the foundations, he was buried under its ruins.

God forbid that I ever should become the apologist of the crimes which have stained the revolution : if its effects have been fortunate, with what streams of blood has the good been purchased ! If posterity should one day render justice to the merit and talents of certain celebrated men, it will devote to execration numbers of those modern sons of Pelias, who cut their father into pieces to give him a new existence.

In



In 1789, the Revolution took place ; two thirds of the French embraced it with enthusiasm ; by a natural consequence enough, the other third beheld nothing in the new system but an hydra preparing their destruction.

The nobility and clergy, who, after having attained the highest summit of riches and honours, found themselves not only levelled with the class of the lowest mechanics, but even pursued by a mistaken people amidst the smoking ruins of their castles ; whose desolated lands no longer furnished them with a certain provision for their subsistence ; these men were of course the declared hereditary enemies to the revolution. To have expected their support to the new order of things, would have argued but little knowledge of the human heart, and would have been to require a miracle from philosophy, when we know of none that philosophy has performed.

But what in the history of our times posterity will hear with surprise, is that in an  
unknown

unknown corner of France, an obscure class of poor and wretched peasants, emancipated by the revolution from the payment of tythes, and the land tax, and thus deriving the greatest advantages from that event, should alone have dared to declare against the new order of things, clamorously called for by almost the whole French nation; should alone have attempted to rear a wall of separation between itself and the rest of France, and endeavour to preserve what it was the general wish to destroy. I am aware I shall be answered, that it was the suggestions of the nobles and priests, which determined these unfortunate inhabitants to make these astonishing efforts, under the weight of which they sunk at last. It is however notorious, that the nobles and the priests (with some very few exceptions) had no share in fomenting this intestine war; those classes were too well informed not to perceive the prodigious inequality of the struggle between a single corner of France and the whole united mass of the kingdom. This fact is certain, nor is there a Vendean  
who

who is ignorant, that the leading chiefs of the Vendée were compelled by the threats of the revolted inhabitants to join the common cause. At the pacification, the chiefs and the priests were the first who embraced with ardour the offers held out, and which the peasants were the last to accept.

It is true that when the nobility and clergy had once engaged in the insurrection, they used every effort, and exerted all their influence to procure the success of their party. The civil war was produced by three causes, all foreign to the pretended insinuations against the nobles and priests.

The first, beyond all doubt, was the execrable tyranny of the Jacobins, and the horrors of which France was too long a witness and a victim. The Vendean, full of respect for morality and the social institutions, which are its effects, could not view, without shuddering, the total overthrow of the body politic; he could not bear to  
trample

trample under foot what he had been accustomed to respect for so many ages ; inimical to all innovation, he could not comprehend the philosophical jargon of our modern Brutuses ; and to use a jacobinical expression, he was not ripe for the Revolution.]

The second cause of the Vendean war was, the persecution against the Catholic Religion ; a persecution as unjust in its principles as it was dangerous in its consequences. In vain did Jacobin missionaries issue from the capital, and with the voice of demoniacs, attempt to infect the peaceful plains with their fanaticism, and endeavour to persuade those good peasants, that the Catholic Religion was a tissue of fabulous nonsense, that there was neither a God, nor Immortality of the Soul, and that they ought to erect temples only to Reason, and that this same Reason was only to be found in Jacobin clubs and taverns ; the inhabitants of the Vendée, surprised at the  
novelty

novelty of these maxims, and the strange manners of these zealous apostles, had no doubt of their intention to pervert and make them converts to revolutionary fanaticism. All their harangues were therefore fruitless, and tended to attach the Vendée more than ever to its ancient worship and its ministers; they keenly felt indeed the blows aimed from every quarter at these objects of their respect; and after having for a long while lamented them in silence, they at length opposed rage to rage, and thus gave this disastrous war a tincture of ferocity, with which it would never otherwise have been marked. Finally, the third cause was the forced levy of three hundred thousand men; this conscription decided the yet undetermined Vendean, and was, properly speaking, the firebrand of the general conflagration. I shall explain this more fully in the subsequent chapters, and I hope the reader will be satisfied with the explanations which shall there be given.

The civil war broke out in 1792, and after a variety of defeats and victories, terminated in 1795. Thanks to the wisdom of the commissioners, sent by the French Government to prevent the ruin of a part of France ! But for their prudent and temperate measures, how much blood would it have further cost, to reduce the Vendée ! They seemed to appear in the midst of the tempest, like those lights which precede the cessation of storms ; and while they wiped away the tears of the unfortunate Vendéans with one hand, they repressed the efforts of those ferocious anarchists, who, like devouring ravens, are gratified only when hovering over human carcases and rivers of blood.

The Plan of this Work is as follows :

First, What was the condition, population, and state of agriculture and commerce of the Vendée before the war ?

Second, The historical sketch of that war ?

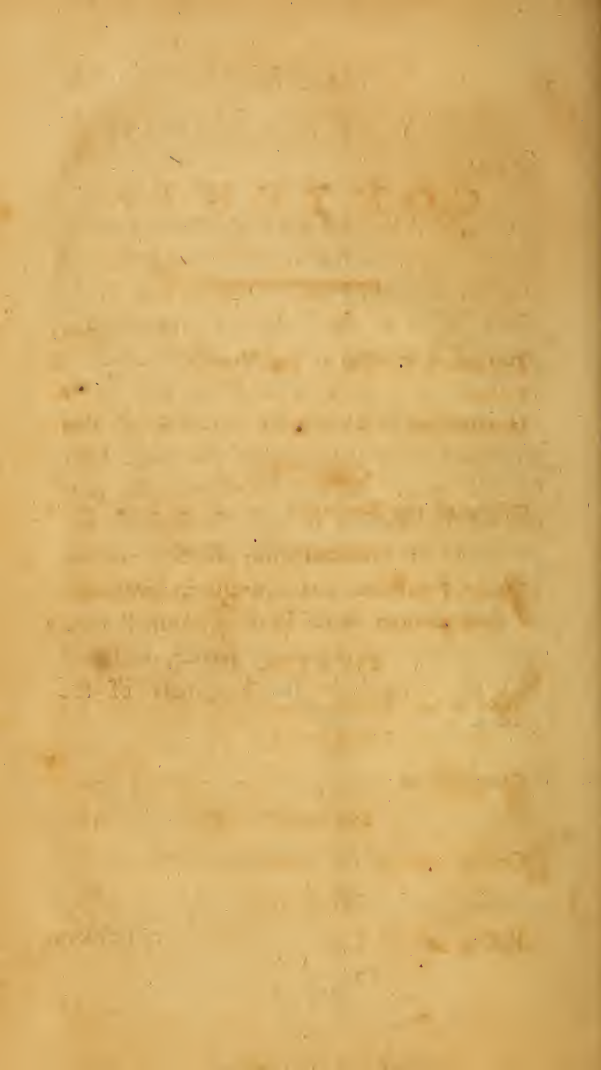
Third,



Third, What is the present state of the Vendée ?

Fourth, Which are the most effectual means of restoring what that country has lost, and even of increasing its agriculture and commerce so as to carry them to the highest pitch of splendour ?

I have undertaken only a sketch of this subject, leaving it to be discussed more fully by able pens. If my ideas towards promoting the welfare of my country are approved of by Government ; if they are followed by one law, one measure, favourable to those whose cause I plead, I shall consider myself repaid for my labour, and shall find my reward in the happiness of the whole.





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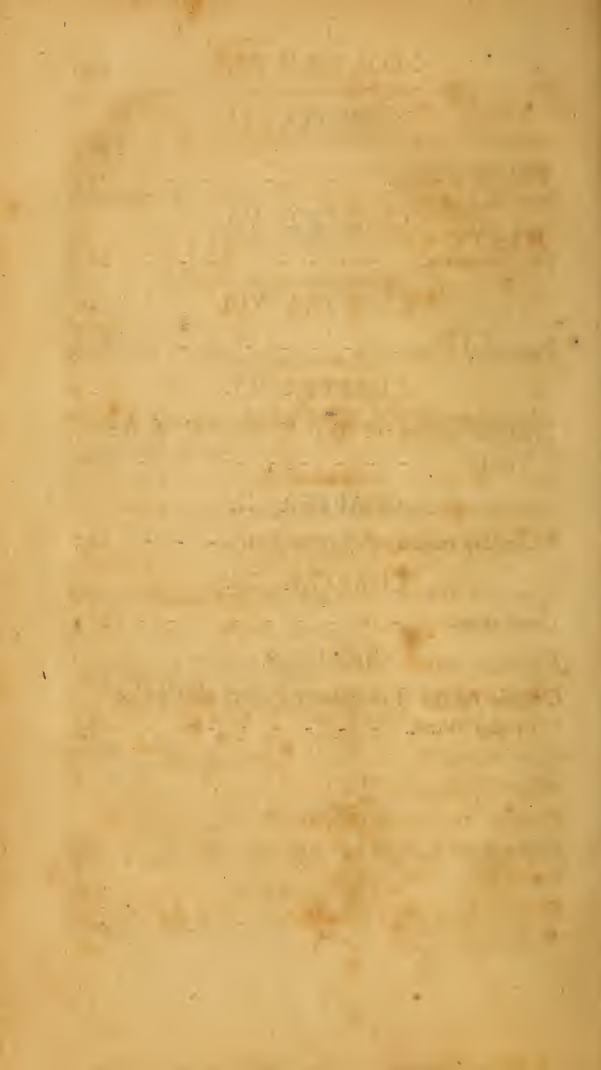
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AN  
HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL  
V I E W  
OF THE  
CIVIL WAR IN THE VENDEE.

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CHAPTER I.  
ORIGIN OF THE VENDEANS.

IT may perhaps be deemed extraordinary that I should assign an origin to the Vendéans, different from that which is common to the French : but when we meditate on the figure, manners, and character of this people, it will be difficult to consider them as any other than the descendants of those Scythian nations, which under the reigns of the last Emperors of the West, overran Italy and the Gauls. Sigebert, Baronius, author of the Annals

of Aquitain, and Gregory of Tours, inform us, that in the third and fourth ages of the Christian era, an army of Huns, Vandals, and other barbarous tribes, commanded by their king Chroccus, assisted and augmented by a horde of Picts, whose Scythian origin was also common to the Huns; after having laid waste part of the Eastern provinces of France, fell upon the coast, and pillaged and ransacked Poitou. These barbarians did not long remain masters of the provinces which they had conquered. Defeated by the troops sent against them, the greatest part were destroyed; and the remainder established themselves on the sea-coast, in Lower Poitou, (the name given by the Picts to their conquest) where they were enabled to receive assistance from their countrymen, who had established themselves in Scotland. In the confusion which reigns among authors who mention these events, it is not easy for the reader to fix the exact time of this invasion. If we are to credit Baronius, it happened in the year 261; but other writers have dated it at the beginning of the fifth century. The latter account seems the most probable to many modern historians. However that may be, it is certain that the Huns, Vandals, and Picts, subjected the western provinces of France, and that a part of them established themselves  
in

in Lower Poitou and in the country of the Armorici, along the coast of Brittany. It is to this point, which cannot be controverted, that we must fix our attention. This fact has never met with any serious opposition; and is spoken of by too many historians to permit us to withhold our assent. I will venture to add, that even were writers not agreed on this subject, it would be impossible to give credit to the common origin of the Vendéans and of the rest of the French. Let them read the descriptions which Livy, Tacitus, Dion, Procopius, and Jornandes have left us of the Franks, the Gauls, and the different Scythian nations; let them compare these with that of the Vendéans, and decide to which of those nations they bear the greatest resemblance.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE VENDEANS. 7

The Vendean is of middling stature, and well made; a large head, thick neck, of a pale complexion, black hair, and small but expressive eyes; such are the leading features of these people. Their understanding is slow but solid, their tem-



per is generous but irascible ; their conceptions less quick than just ; faithful to their engagements ; with simple and even pure manners ; a strong attachment to religious institutions ; an extraordinary degree of taciturnity, but softened by a great benevolence ; minds more fitted for moderate though less lucrative employment, than for difficult labour ; a total indifference for the pleasures of the table ; great integrity in commerce ; little aptitude for the fine arts, but much for the abstract sciences ; of a bilious and melancholy habit of body ; with no philosophical principle, but a disdain for life, and stoical contempt of death ; slow of decision in the ordinary occurrences of life, but capable, under the impulse of passion, of the most ardent activity, and of the most heroical exploits : such is the character of the Vendean.\*

The

\* I shall here present the reader with a sketch of the character of the Gauls and also of the Franks.

“ The Gauls are fair and of large stature, they have naturally red hair, are ready to take up arms, but their courage forsakes them at the first repulse, and they want spirit and resolution in defeat. At the onset they are more like lions than men, but at the second, they are worse than women.”

POLYBIUS, CESAR, STRABO, AND LIVY.

“ The Franks are of lofty stature, light hair, and blue eyes. They unite vigor and strength of body, to grace and beauty.

Fond

The reader will not expect every inhabitant of the Vendée to answer this description. A traveller who should survey these countries, and find some of the people large, fair, and sprightly, in a word, not answering to the sketch I have given, will perhaps suspect that I have been mistaken; but I appeal from this decision to the enlightened observer, who, for many years has inhabited the country, and submit, without apprehension, to the judgment he shall form.

We find indeed amidst the ancient conquerors of lower Poitou, a mixed race, descended from some remains of the ancient inhabitants, from the Visigoths, who were established there for so long a time, and perhaps, from some descendants of those Franks who accompanied Clovis to the conquest of Aquitain: but the greater part of the inhabitants bearing a resemblance to the foregoing description, we may, without fear of contradiction, assert that they have a Scythian origin.

Fond of war and spoil, they cannot bear the name of peace, and seem bound together by one common ardor."

CLAUDIAN, EUMENIUS, AND SIDONIUS-APPOLLINARIUS.

Let the reader compare these descriptions with that I have given of the Vendéans, and decide for himself.

Upon

Upon the whole, in perusing this Chapter, the reader will be convinced that the Vendéans inherit more of the virtues than the vices of their ancestors. Be that as it may, have they lost, or have they gained by this origin? I leave the reader of this Historical Essay to determine the question.

## CHAPTER II.

EXTENT, POPULATION, AND COMMERCE OF THE  
VENDÉE PREVIOUS TO THE WAR.

IT is rather difficult to fix any precise bounds to the Insurgent Country known under the name of the Vendée. The greater part of the towns, such as Fontenay, la Chateigneraie, Bressuire, and Thouars, having taken no part in the insurrection of the surrounding Communes, it would seem unjust to enumerate them in the list of the Vendean or insurgent districts. Nevertheless, in order to fix some limit to the seat of this War, I am compelled to lay down as its boundary, from southwest to north, the course of the Loire, from Saumur to Nantes; and from north to east and south, the great road from Saumur to Rochelle. At the same time, I must inform the reader, that nearly a fourth of this territory took no active part in the plans of the Vendean, and that on the contrary the inhabitants of the greater part of the towns included in this space enlisted in defence of the Republic. I shall, nevertheless, style this country the Vendée  
for

for reasons I have just given. This territory contains nearly eight hundred and sixty square leagues, in which are situated seven hundred communes, whose population before the war, was estimated at eight hundred thousand inhabitants. The population of such a fertile country, would without doubt have been much more considerable, had the Intendants who were in possession of the government thought proper to give it more of their attention; but altogether employed in the immediate produce of their capitals, they never dreamt of the resources which were to be drawn from the fertility of the Soil; nor had their predecessors regarded this part of their administration as of any importance, or as an object the least capable of improvement. The intendants, it is true, were not the only persons to be blamed for this neglect, for it must be admitted, that at that period, plans of agricultural improvement, from which our neighbours have reaped so many advantages, were totally unknown among us. Trifles had too much engaged our attention to suffer us to dwell with complacency on any thing which bore the marks of utility. If an intendant employed the resources of a whole province to build a theatre in its capital to lay out a magnificent square, or to decorate a public garden, he was sure of gaining general consideration

consideration and esteem ; his name, inscribed on those gaudy monuments, was crowned with immortality. On the contrary, had he employed this money in the clearing of land, in opening of canals, in draining marshes, or in other objects of public utility, he would have been treated as an innovator, or as an economist ; his avarice and pitiful conceptions been the subjects of animadversion and ridicule ; he would have been attacked in pamphlets and lampoons, and, after having been overwhelmed by the censures of the most considerable persons in the province, he would have been recalled and disgraced by the court. The monarchy in France under this point of view, resembled a stripling, who found nothing great that did not dazzle, and nothing useful that was not covered with gold or silver lace.

*Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus æris.*

Under the administration of such intendants, the Vendée could never rise to any degree of great improvement, and with every kind of plenty at home there was no exportation for their superfluities ; commerce was stagnant, and industry fettered at every step. Thus abandoned,  
destitute



destitute of aid or influence; deprived of the fostering care of Government, without which a province is as it were a desert, how was it possible that the population of this country should have increased. The Vendée in this state resembled Holland, under the government of the House of Burgundy; like this country it was poor, despised, as it were unknown, and, in short, scarcely thought worthy of being numbered in the list of provinces. There is a striking resemblance in several points between the fate of Holland and that of the Vendée. If, when roused from long and disgraceful slumbers, the Dutchmen several times carried terror into the formidable empire of Philip II. the Vendean, ashamed of the yoke under which France groaned from the oppression of Robespierre, has with equal ardor, by prodigious efforts, and innumerable actions of heroism, shaken his colossal power. Happy had the country no cause to shed tears over its triumphs, and equally happy if the Jacobins had been the only victims of the disastrous and disgraceful war, which they had provoked. I am far from being of the same opinion with those revolutionary philosophers, who have insisted that insurrection against tyranny is the most sacred of duties. They little suspected when they advanced



vanced this proposition that a part of France would shortly turn this erroneous principle against themselves, and that the blood of thousands of Frenchmen would mark its error and absurdity. But to return to my subject.

The reader will bear in mind the limits I have laid down for the Vendée. Before we speak of its productions and commerce, I shall divide it into two parts, in order to facilitate my observations. I shall therefore call the country situated on this side the Sèvre Nantaïse, the Lower Vendée, and that on the opposite side of the same river, the Upper Vendée.

Although these two divisions resemble each other in the character, the manners of their inhabitants, and some of their productions, there is a considerable difference in the nature and fertility of their soil. The Lower Vendée, situated on the sea coast, was nothing more than a long range of marshes, from which is extracted excellent salt, and which produces wheat of the first quality, flax, hemp, draught-horses, and a few sheep and oxen. That part most remote from the sea, produces excellent rye, timber for building,  
and

and fire wood, of which the country near the sea is destitute.

The Upper Vendée produces rye of the first quality: it also rears excellent mules, which compensate to the inhabitants the want of draught horses, and which being in high repute, are purchased at a dear rate by the Spaniards at the fairs of Champ-Deniers. Some cantons also rear sheep, which for size, quality of the fleece, and goodness of flesh, vie with the most esteemed in France: \* These sheep are sent to Paris, for the consumption of the Metropolis, and their wool is a considerable object of commerce with the neighbouring departments. The fat oxen, with which our largest cities are supplied, of whose succulent juices the English are so proverbially fond, and on which foreigners in general place so much value, are reared in this district, which also furnishes Normandy and the rest of France with draught-oxen; these after three years growth are taken out of their rich pastures and sent into the interior provinces, where they are employed in agriculture.

\* The sheep bred in the mountains of Mortagne are held in the highest estimation.

The fine thread, called *dougy*, employed in the manufactories of Chollet in making fine handkerchiefs, is spun from the flax of the Upper Vendée, which, as well as the hemp, is considered as much superior to that grown in the lower part: and to form an idea of the prodigious quantity of wood with which this country is covered, the reader need only be informed that timber and fire wood are at a much cheaper rate than in any other part of France. Holland is also supplied from the northern part with white wines and brandy, which, conveyed in carriages to Montrieul Bellay, are embarked on the Thoué, and conveyed from Saumur to Nantes, where the merchants freight their vessels with these commodities. Besides these necessaries of life, the inhabitants gather a prodigious quantity of chesnuts, and apples, of which they make excellent cyder: their numerous dairies furnish them with butter far superior to the best in Brittany; and the country also supplies them with buck wheat, millet and turnips, on which they feed their cattle.

On comparing the respective advantages which their different productions give to the Upper and Lower Vendée, it is difficult to decide which is most favoured by Nature. The inestimable advantages

advantages which the Lower Vendée derives from its vicinity to the sea, seem at first sight to decide in its favor; but if we consider the pestilential vapours which exhale from its marshes, and the unwholesome qualities of its waters\*, we must admit, that these advantages are dearly purchased.

It must be allowed, however, that the natives live to nearly the same age as the inhabitants of the other provinces, and that the noxious air and unwholesome waters have no influence, except in persons unaccustomed to the climate.

The Upper Vendée is watered by four or five rivers, of which the Thoué and the Sèvre-Nantaise are the most considerable, and a great number of springs and fountains are also included in this district.

The Lower Vendée is more favored in this respect than the Upper. Besides a great number of rivers, such as the Sèvre, Niortaise, Authiel,

\* The infected air of the marshes and the corrupted water which the inhabitants are under the necessity of drinking, operated as fatally on the Republican army as the followers of Charette.

and

and the Vendée, which run across the country, it is bounded on one side by the Loire, and on the other by the Sea.

When we consider these numerous advantages, we might be permitted to affirm, that this beautiful country might be made the most flourishing part of France.

Before we speak of the commerce, the exports, and imports of the Vendée, I ought to inform the reader, that the account already before him, as well as that which follows, is applicable only to the state of the country previous to the cruel war which has covered it with ruins and ashes. Notwithstanding the benevolent efforts of the magistrates which the government has chosen for the administration of this province, many years must pass before the dreadful wounds inflicted on its trade, population, and means of existence can be healed, unless the government, laying aside all feeble palliatives, should adopt a general plan of restoration, which as yet a destructive war has not permitted it to accomplish.

Previous to the war, the Vendée exported annually nearly five hundred thousand quintals  
of

of corn, three parts of which were rye,\* sixty thousand quintals§ of hemp and flax, two thousand and ninety ditto of wool, six thousand head of cattle, twenty thousand draught-oxen, three thousand draught-horses, two thousand mules, ten thousand square metres† of plank and timber, twenty-five thousand steres‡ of fire wood, eight hundred quintals of charcoal, twenty-six thousand ditto of hay, twenty-six thousand ditto of butter and more than one hundred thousand of salt, exclusive of the fishery, chefnuts, millet, and other inferior sorts of provisions, for which there was a considerable sale.

With all these advantages, I am persuaded that this commerce is capable of still greater extension.

The importations of the Vendée, before the war, for its internal consumption, were ten thousand hogheads of wine; since the peace, this consumption is reduced a tenth, which is a severe

\* Vide Chapter XI.

§ A quintal weighs one hundred pounds English.

† A metre is somewhat more than three feet English.

‡ A stère is somewhat more than a cube of three feet English.



blow to the trade of the neighbouring departments; it imported likewise all the clothing of the inhabitants, as well as stuffs, filks, cottons, printed calicoes, painted cloths, fustians, dressed hides, iron, steel, brass, pewter, lead, caps, hats, silk stockings, sugar, oil, medicinal and other drugs, all sorts of groceries, all kinds of articles of gold and silver, and in short, almost every species of manufacture and commerce, possessing no other manufactories than those of paper fabricated at Mortagne, and of handkerchiefs at Chollet.

The reader will observe from what has been advanced, and by comparing the amount of the importations with the exportations, deducting the expence of cultivation and maintenance from the latter, that there remains but little advantage to the Vendean on the score of commerce. According to the calculation I have made, the benefit scarcely exceeds a twentieth part. The causes of this are,

First, The want of great roads, and even of pathways.

Secondly, The want of manufactures and navigable rivers in the interior of the country.

D

Third,



Thirdly, The carelessness and inattention of government.

The Vendée therefore was not rich in coin, since the inhabitants gave with one hand what they received with the other. Having no great capitalists among them, they could not engage in extensive commercial concerns. Remedy the defects I have stated, and the exports of the Vendée will soon increase in a tenfold proportion, its imports will sensibly diminish, or at least be considered less burdensome, and the country now miserable and exhausted will become rich and flourishing.

The plans which must be put in execution to attain this desirable end, shall be the subject of the following pages. I have hitherto given a state of the population and commerce of the Vendée previous to the war. Its state since the war shall be treated of, after giving an historical summary of the three campaigns, which have laid this unfortunate country in ruins.

## CHAPTER III.

WAR IN THE VENDÉE. CAMPAIGN OF 1792.

ALTHOUGH I shall not pretend to write the history of the civil war which has desolated the Vendée, nor do I think the time is yet come when its history ought to be written, I cannot forbear giving at least a slight sketch of these dreadful transactions. This war is too nearly connected with the subject of which I am treating, to suffer me to pass it by unnoticed; and it would be wrong to conceal the causes, when I am speaking of its effect. I enter, therefore, on this painful task by recommending myself to the indulgence and impartiality of my reader. I am conscious that at every step I take, I shall be contradicted by numbers, who will all declare themselves to have been eye witnesses\*. To such I shall answer beforehand,

\* When the Bastille was taken, more than a thousand eye-witnesses, who narrated the circumstances of this capture,

hand, that those from whom I have collected these facts, have been also to my certain knowledge eye witnesses, who have appeared to me so much the more worthy of credit, as they have constantly lived in the Vendée during the whole of the war, and could have no interest in deceiving me.

I have already mentioned the gloomy discontent which prevailed in the Vendée, from the commencement of the revolution. Attached by habit and custom to their ancient institutions, these simple provincials did not view without horror the fall of the ancient monarchy, and the religion of their fathers fapped to the very foundation. Friends to order, they beheld nothing in the revolution but anarchy and confusion, and whilst the majority of the French listened with enthusiasm to the flattering hopes of their representatives, and really believed that they

gave us as many different accounts of the transactions. The cause of this variety in their accounts arises, perhaps, from the want of judgment in those different witnesses. Each had fixed his attention on some single circumstance; no one had taken in the whole of the operations and movements. From what I have said, therefore, it results, that the evidence of one enlightened observer is preferable to that of a thousand inattentive spectators.

had

had already attained several of the promised benefits, the Vendean loudly murmured at the progress of impiety and injustice, and declared in the jargon of his country that all the disorder *would lead to nothing good*. This gloomy discontent, the forerunner of the storm, and which was treated with contempt, might have been appeased at first; but the jacobins who had seized upon the revolution, and who, intoxicated with power, feared no obstacle to their ambitious plans, thought no other measure necessary, in order to bring this corner of France to reason, than to send two *sans-culottes* missionaries thither \*; they could not conceive that so wretched a caste could resist such alluring baits as the destruction of the land-owners, or refuse to take what was so freely offered to them; in a word, they deceived them-

\* The two *sans-culottes* missionaries to whom the author alludes were Genfonné, deputy from the Gironde, and one of the most respectable members of the first Legislative body: the other was Gallois, late envoy to England, and now member of the Tribunate. Genfonné suffered death with the twenty-two deputies of the party called Girondist, who were the avowed enemies of the Jacobins. These men so well succeeded in their mission at the time, that having pacified the country, they returned to Paris with the honorable title given them by the inhabitants of the Vendée, of "Angels of peace".—*Note of the Translator.*

elves

selves, and their mistake has cost us nearly as much blood as the shooting and drowning scenes and other horrors which, for so long a time, desolated France.

The passions of the Vendéans were already inflamed. Discontented with the government, and abhorring its bloody principles, the greater part of the decrees against the clergy were regarded by them as so many crimes. Nevertheless, pondering in their hearts the projects which they had planned, they remained silent observers of the quarrels between the expiring monarchy and the infant republic. With such dispositions, a spark was only wanting to produce the explosion, and in the fermentation which prevailed in France at that time, with thousands of firebrands crossing each other from every direction, this fatal spark was not long concealed.

At length, the fatal epocha of terror took place ; the jacobins declaring that nothing was wanting to Frenchmen but bread and the sword, seized on the property of the rich, rolled in debauchery and drunkenness, and, under the guise of Spartans, surpassed in their nocturnal orgies the sensuality of the Sybarite. All those who were not of their party, were proscribed by these fanatical apostles of equality, thrown into dungeons

geons in the name of liberty, and slaughtered, while their murderers were invoking universal fraternity. These new Phætons, with ignorance equal to their cruelty, by their unskilful management of the car of government, roused against them all the neighbouring nations, and by their folly lighted up a general flame which, perhaps, would still have consumed Europe, if the hand of an hero had not at length extinguished it. \*

No sooner did the Vendéans experience the terrible effects of this destructive system, than roused by

\* I did not wait to manifest my admiration for this great man till he was placed at the head of government. On the taking of Mantua I addressed an ode to him.

*Note of the Author.*

Many shared the admiration of the author at the epocha he mentions; but the impartial reader will recollect that when Bonaparte was placed at the head of government, the greater part of the coalition had been silenced, and the issue of the war, from the events which had then taken place, was no longer doubtful. With respect to the Jacobins exciting the Potentates of Europe by their cruelties, it must be remembered, that the war broke out during the monarchy, and that the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick preceded the reign of terror. The Author seems to have mistaken the effect for the cause, and in his zeal against Jacobinism, to have confounded very opposite parties and epochas in the revolution.—*Note of the Translator.*

the



the old leaven which had so long fermented amongst them, they flew to arms, without considering the frightful precipice on which they stood, or the dreadful wounds they were about to inflict on their country.

The first spark of this dreadful conflagration displayed itself in the Lower Vendée. The history of the hair dresser, named Gaston, is too well known to need repetition here; it will be enough to observe, that from this instant the insurrection assumed a most formidable aspect. The first body of republican troops sent against the insurgents were completely defeated, and this event, while it served to increase the courage of the conquerors, struck a mortal blow at France. In an instant, the insurrection spread through the whole of the Lower Vendée; the greater part of the towns excepted, the inhabitants of which, more cautious and prudent, not only refused to join, but even made several efforts to crush this insurrection in its infancy. A great number of citizens, also, averse to disorder and bloodshed, sought refuge from the impending storm in the neighbouring departments.

The Upper Vendée was in insurrection at almost the same instant. The requisition of  
thirty



thirty thousand men had irritated in a singular degree the inhabitants of this part of France, They had presumed that their remaining quiet was a sufficient act of complaisance towards the revolution, but to be called on to defend an administration they abhorred was deemed an act of absurdity and insolence.

The pursuit directed against the refractory militia, was the signal of general revolt. The orders for these persecutions had been scarcely dispatched from Chatillon and Bressuire, when these two towns found themselves almost instantly surrounded by an innumerable number of half-armed peasants, without leaders, without any settled plan, without any motive than that of intimidating by the display of their numbers, and, in short under the idea that the capture of Bressuire and Chatillon would spread alarm throughout France, and cause the decrees of which they complained to be repealed.

Chatillon, carried by these numberless hordes, and Bressuire, closely pressed, demanded aid in the most urgent manner from the neighbouring towns and even from the adjoining departments. The government, till this moment, seemed to have taken

no notice of them, as the revolt in the Lower Vendée had caused but little sensation at Paris ; but on the news of this second insurrection, the capital, the provinces, the superior officers of the army, and every person took the alarm.

In an instant the roads were lined with National Guards, the only moveable troops at that time, and the general rendezvous was fixed at Breffuire. This town withstood the daily attacks of the insurgents, and bravely seconded by the two companies of chasseurs and grenadiers of Thouars, the guard of Airvaut, and other patriots, defended itself with courage and success. In the mean time the departmental National Guards hastened from all quarters, and in a short time reached the gates of Breffuire. The battle which ensued did not last long ; the Vendéans were completely routed and put to flight. I have already stated that they were without plan, or any fixed leader. The commanders were divided among themselves, and had not the smallest idea of acting together ; from the commencement of the engagement they fought only for their respective safety, leaving the greater part of this ill-armed mass, a prey to the patriots, who pressed them on all sides, and

cut to pieces without mercy all who had not escaped.

I shall not attempt to paint the horrors which stained this victory, and shall pass over in silence the murder of women and infants, whose mangled limbs, stuck on the points of bayonets, were carried about in triumph. Unhappily, these horrors are inseparable from civil war, and in general are the deeds of a few miscreants, and not of the major part of the army; it would therefore be an injustice to impute it to them. I shall here mention one fact in support of what I have advanced, when I spoke of the character of the Vendéans, and which will serve to show to what a length they carried that unconquerable stubbornness, and stoical contempt of death which I have already noticed.

After the battle of Breffuire, pardon and life had been offered to a great number of these miserable people, on condition of crying *vive la Nation*; a few submitted to it, but the rest obstinately refused the proffered pardon, and threw themselves on their knees, ready to receive the fatal blow; and without displaying the smallest emotion, requested no other favour, than that, after death

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their

their bodies might be covered with a sufficient quantity of earth to protect them from the voracity of dogs and wolves. This trait, which occurred several times during the war, has been testified to me by more than a hundred persons, who were eye witnesses. The revolutionists attributed this extraordinary firmness to fanaticism, a term which has been applied to the Catholic religion, for some years past; but I think every honest mind will view with admiration such fortitude in an ignorant and low-bred peasant, of which the Zenos and Epictetuses of old wore only the mask.

I cannot help noticing in this place the ridiculous reports circulated by the Jacobins at Paris, and which were credited by a great number of the *badands*\*; that the Vendéans imagined they should return to life again at the end of three days, and that the leaden bullets of their enemies would be changed into balls of cork. The Vendéans were for a long while amused with these ridiculous stories, which those who circulated them did not believe, but which it was their interest to promulgate. But to return to my subject.

\* A term of ridicule for a Parisian, like that of Cockney for an inhabitant of London.

Had the patriotic army been skilfully commanded, the battle of Bressuire would have put an end to the civil war. To effect this, they had only to punish a few of the principal leaders, grant a general pardon to the rest, establish a system of prudence, good faith, and of severity tempered by mercy and justice, and finally, station a detachment of troops in each canton, to awe the mal-contents.

Such a line of conduct would have infallibly met with success, but at this melancholy period, few knew how to obey, and all were eager to command: the departments, the districts, the clubs, the different commissioners, the inferior officers, and even the private soldier, each in their turn thwarted the plans and views of their generals, from the preference which they gave to their own. In a word, the anarchy of the capital had diffused itself into the armies, and in those disastrous times, victory was less to be attributed to the skilful conduct of our generals, than to the invincible courage of our troops.

The patriotic army, principally composed of fathers of families, instead of following this plan,  
dictated

dictated by prudence, abandoned the theatre of war the instant the first tumult had subsided. Anxious to see their homes and families, each person carried back the news of their triumphs, and at length left only a small garrison at Breffuire. Nothing could be more impolitic than such conduct, as the event now proved ; for the Vendéans, recovered from their first alarm, flew to arms, and the war became more bloody than ever.

To repair this fault, the government sent a general with troops to Chollet : General Ligonier marched also with an army towards Vihiers. But too weak to stem the torrent, these troops only served to discipline the rebels, in the number of actions and skirmishes which had taken place, and which were not attended with any decisive consequences.

Meanwhile, Breffuire, more pressed than ever, implored again the assistance of her neighbours. The first town that flew to her assistance was Thouars. There was in that town at the time a chief of batallion named Quetineau, who was looked on by the inhabitants as their fellow-citizen ; he had obtained leave to quit his regiment,



ment, which was then in the low countries, in order to settle some family affairs in Thouars. The inhabitants thought it would be politic, considering the circumstances in which they were placed, to choose him commander of the National Guard. Knowing also the courage of this officer, the choice was unanimously assented to, and the minister of war, to whom a dispatch was sent, conferred on Quetineau the rank of Commandant General of the division of Breffuire. When he reached this town he assembled about four thousand men; but his first exploits furnished sufficient proofs of his incapacity \*. Frequent skirmishes, but none decisive; bravery in both general and soldiers, but without any enlarged views, or settled plan of operations: such was the mode of conducting this war, and it might readily be perceived at first sight, that the glory of pacifying the Vendée would not fall to the lot of forinexperienced a commander.

On the other hand, the insurrection in the department of the Maine and Loire, assumed an

\* Quetineau has several times declared that he had not abilities for a general; but it would have been equally difficult for a more experienced commander to have terminated this war, with an army as badly disciplined as that of which they had given him the command.



aspect still more serious; Cathalineau, Domagne; and Bonchamps, skilful and daring leaders, had inspired their foldiers with an enthusiasm, which the insurgents of the district of Chatillon had not yet felt. The insurrection also increased in the Lower Vendée; where Charette, who had for some time refused to declare in favor of the royal party, at length acceded to the wishes of the Vendéans, and took the command. In order to discipline his army, he engaged every day in slight skirmishes, the preludes of those bloody battles which have more than once brought France to the very verge of ruin, and inflicted wounds, the scars of which will long remain.

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Although the plan which I have adopted does not permit me to enter into a minute detail of the events of which I have just given a short sketch, I flatter myself that the greater part of my readers will find their curiosity gratified by observing in what manner and by what steps, a spark kindled in a part of the Vendée produced a conflagration which had nearly spread over the whole of France.

In

In the course of the work, I have already stated the causes of this civil war ; I have shewn by what means the first insurrection of 1792 was quelled, and the errors by which it was suffered to revive. A fatal presumption plunged the whole of the country into a terrible war, in which it has spilled its best blood ; nor was it conjectured that any Vendean would be daring enough to erect the standard of revolt, after the dreadful examples, and severe punishments which had been inflicted on the rebels. Here was the mistake ; the fire was only covered with ashes, and the explosion was great in proportion to the compression. The first blow proceeded from the banks of the Loire, from the town of St. Florent-le-Vieux.

On the 12th of March, 1793, the young men of the neighbouring communes were ordered to assemble in the district of this town, to recruit the republican armies, and to form a part of the levy of three hundred thousand men. Enraged at this order, they assembled with the intention of causing it to be revoked, or of disputing its authority. The administrators endeavoured to use the means of persuasion, but their attempts were interrupted by hissings. A field-piece which was pointed against the mutineers, only served to increase their audacity.

The disorder grew more tumultuous, and the republican commandant having ordered the cannon to be fired, several of the young men were wounded. This blow served as a signal ; the insurgents fell in crowds upon the republicans, and seized the field-piece ; after putting them to flight, the district was plundered, the archives were destroyed, the assignats carried off, and the victorious band passed the rest of the evening in the neighbouring public-houses, singing their triumphs, and spending the assignats.

The insurgents dispersed the next morning, each one taking the road to his own house. The insurrection now seemed to have been over, and probably nothing farther would have ensued, if one of the revolted communes, Pin-en-Mauge, had not numbered amongst its inhabitants one of those enterprising heads and daring minds which sport with danger, and whose proper element seems to be that of political storms. Cathelineau who, under the dress of a carman, possessed both elevation of sentiment and intrepidity of character, no sooner heard of the affair of St. Florent, than he conceived the project of putting it to advantage, and raising the whole of the Vendée. Without calculating the chances of so rash an enterprise, without comparing his

his weak powers with the vast resources of his adversaries, and without fathoming the depth of the abyss into which he should plunge his fellow-citizens, this enthusiast traversed the country, placed himself at the head of the malcontents, formed an army, and urged them to resistance. The post of Jalais, advantageously situated upon the heights of a chateau, in an intrenchment defended by a six pounder, called the *Missionary*, was guarded by a republican detachment of eighty men, who did not in the least expect an attack, when a confused noise announced the approach of the enemy. The republicans prepared for defence, and fired, but without wounding any person : the intrepid Cathelineau, at the head of two hundred men, who composed his little army, ordered the quick march. In ten minutes the intrenchment was carried, the patriots put to flight, and their chiefs made prisoners. The enemy seized upon the cannon, arms, and ammunition, but this was only a prelude to an engagement of more importance ; for without allowing his people time to rest, Cathelineau left Jalais at noon, and marched towards Chemille, two leagues distant from the field of battle. This town was defended by two hundred men and three cul-

verines, and seemed out of the reach of a *coup-de-main*.

The enemy, however, continued to advance, while the republicans pointed their artillery, and endeavoured to affright the rebels by a well adjusted fire. Without stopping to answer them with the piece they had captured at Jalais, the insurgents fell upon their adversaries with impetuosity, and after a combat of half an hour, Chemille was carried by storm. A great number of prisoners, the three culverines, the ammunition, and a part of the musketry, fell into the hands of the conquerors.

Such was the result of the first day. The army of Cathelineau, so few in number at first, was now augmented by a croud of malcontents, who waited only for an opportunity to declare themselves, and he began to reckon his troops by thousands.

On the 15th of March, Cathelineau marched upon Chollet; whilst he was on the point of attacking this town, he was joined by a considerable body of men brought from the environs of Maulevrier, and commanded by the celebrated Stofflet.

It

It would have been very difficult for so weak a garrison as that of Chollet to make any long resistance against a victorious army, so the engagement was speedily terminated. The republicans, routed at the first attack, retreated to the town, into which the conquerors entered pell-mell with them. The capture of Chollet, by reviving the reputation of the royalist army, provoked the insurrection of the whole of the Vendée, and the war now assumed a different aspect. Hitherto the government had regarded these rebellious movements only as partial disturbances very easy to be suppressed, but, after this blow, they discovered that they had to quell a civil war, which threatened the destruction of the State. Independent of the thousands of recruits which the conquerors gained by this victory, they took a considerable quantity of arms and ammunition, and four field pieces, with the famous piece Marie-Jeanne. The indefatigable Cathelineau directed his march the following day towards Vitriers, which town was the same day evacuated; but the insurgents took nothing here except a few waggons loaded with the papers of the district, of which they made cartridges. After so many engagements, the Vendéans stood in need of a  
little



little rest, and accordingly separated, in order to spend the week of Low-Sunday. The different attacks of the republicans had been ineffective to lead them to change their plan; for seven hundred men, who left Angiers, to scour the country, met with no resistance, and it was therefore hoped that the conflagration would be extinguished without any further effect: but this hope soon proved deceitful.

On the 9th of April, the royalist army advanced upon Chollet, and, after assembling all their forces, marched on the 11th towards Chemille. Four thousand republicans, posted in two columns, defended themselves with the greatest courage; but, surrounded by a superior force, were at length compelled to yield. A thousand men, captured or disabled, was the result of this victory. Meanwhile, the Vendéans, unable to undertake any further enterprize from the want of powder, were obliged to fall back on Beaupreau, and from thence upon Tiffanges, in order to provide themselves with powder and recruits. An event fatal for the Republic relieved them from this embarrassment. General Laroche-Jaquelin had taken at the battle of Aubiers several barrels of powder, and finding the army at Tiffanges, he shared



shared with it his ammunition. On the 17th of April, they again marched to Chollet, of which four hundred grenadiers of Saumur had taken possession; these men, at the sight of so superior a force, shut themselves up in the Chateau of Bois-Grotteau, where they were blockaded by the royalists.

Meanwhile, the Government observing the daily progress of the insurgents, took vigorous measures to crush the revolt. A considerable army marched towards Vitriers in front of the Vendéans, whilst another, no less formidable, advanced upon Beaupreau to take them in rear. Had these measures been well executed they would infallibly have rooted out the spirit of rebellion; but events of a very different nature were destined to take place. On the nineteenth the royalists discovered their enemies advancing upon them, in the best order possible, on the side of Vitriers. Cathelineau on this drew up his troops, and fell upon the republicans with an intrepidity which astonished them: they nevertheless remained firm, and defended themselves with bravery; but surrounded on all sides, attacked in front, flank, and rear, they were obliged at length to fly. The enemy pursued, and made a great slaughter.

All

All their artillery and ammunition fell into the hands of the conquerors, and at the conclusion of the engagement, the garrison of Bois-Grotteau was obliged to surrender prisoners of war.

During this time, the second republican army was making considerable progress on the side of Beaupreau; detachments occupied Chemille, St. Florent, and Mont-Reveau, when Cathelineau, collecting his troops, arrived on the 23d of April, at Beaupreau, and offered battle to the enemy. The republicans fought with courage, but their bravery could have no effect on men, who fearing no danger, threw themselves headlong upon their cannons and bayonets. They were forced to give way, and, pursued by the enemy, were compelled to cross the Loire, leaving the insurgents in possession of six pieces of cannon, and several waggons loaded with gun powder: a loss the more fatal, as it furnished the Vendéans with new means of triumph. The success of this day at Beaupreau, led the conquerors to suppose that they were invincible, and spread such a consternation among the vanquished, that for four months they did not dare to advance into the country. After this victory, the royalists  
returned

returned to their homes. On the 26th they received orders to muster at Chollet, which was the place of rendez-vous for the projected expedition against Breffuire, Argenton, and Thouars, the success of which will be shown in the following pages. I shall finish this digression, by observing that the Generals Bonchamps and D'Elbée first carried arms in the Vendée, at the affair of Chemillé, on the 11th of April, 1793, and that Cathelineau was mortally wounded at the siege of Nantes.

## CHAPTER IV.

CAMPAIGN OF 1793. (APRIL 25).

WE have now reached the Spring of 1793, a year that will be ever regarded in the annals of France, as one of the most disastrous epochas of its empire.

I have before mentioned, that Bonchamps, Domagné, and other chiefs had, as it were, organised and disciplined their troops in the various skirmishes, of which Vitriers, Chollet, and Coron had been the theatre, and where the first engagements had taken place. Bonchamps had become master of Chollet, and marched against Ligonier, who, defeated in several engagements, was obliged to retreat towards Doué. Pressed on all sides, and too weak to contend with the insurgents, he ordered Quetineau to join him with his army. Instead of taking the road, which, though

though the longest, was the most safe, Quetineau, in obedience no doubt to the order of his general, ventured to cross the enemy's country. He accordingly directed his march towards Aubiers, but was attacked unawares in this village by a body of the rebels, and his army thrown into confusion.

Quetineau performed prodigies of valour, and fought as a private soldier; his valour was useless, his orders were no longer obeyed, and the rout became general. The fate of his army would have been decided, had not a few regular troops formed themselves into a square battalion on the field of battle, and sustained the fire of the enemy, until the fugitives had found shelter in Breffuire. This victory of Aubiers, which spirited up the Vendéans and gave them fresh courage, was only the prelude of those more brilliant actions which raised the Vendée to the pinnacle of its greatness, but which, by exaggerating its hopes, hastened its ruin. Laroche-Jaquelin, a celebrated chieftain of whom we shall hereafter have occasion to speak, carried arms for the first time in this engagement. Meanwhile Quetineau, harassed, discouraged, continually contradicted and even insulted by an undisciplined troop of Marseillais who had joined him at Breffuire,

after the defeat of Aubiers, and fearing that he should be blocked up in a town that was open and defenceless, resolved to evacuate this weak post, and retreat to Thouars. This town, built upon a hill, almost entirely surrounded by the river of Thoué, formed a military post, one of the best in the whole of the Vendée\*. It was a wise measure in Quétineau to take possession of this place, and he had just time sufficient to put his plan in execution; for the day after he left Bressuire, it was taken by twenty-five thousand of the enemy; Argenton surrendered also the next day, and

\* There is not a town in *ci-devant* Poitou, more capable of being fortified, and whose position is so strong as that of Thouars. Situated on a hill commanded by no superior height, it is watered by the Thoué, which is fordable only in one place, and running in a crooked direction, defends the southern and western sides. This ancient town was formerly regarded as the key of Anjou and Poitou. We read in the annals of Nicholas Gilles, that the famous Pepin, during the war against Gaifré, duke of Aquitaine, chose the town of Thouars, at that time known by the name of Theodad, as his dépôt. It sustained a year's siege against the famous Du Guesclin, and what will sufficiently shew the importance attached to the capture of this place, is that the old king Edward III. who had received with indifference the account of the surrender of Niort, Saint-Moïsent, Fontenay, and even Poitiers, the instant he was informed of this place being besieged, flew to its assistance with eighty ships.

the

the greater part of the garrison was massacred. In short, on the 5th of May, the Vendéan army, reinforced by more than ten thousand men, and commanded by Bonchamps, D'Elbée, Laroche Jaqueline, and Lescures, whose presence inspired them with fresh ardor, boldly advanced towards Thouars. In the list of their chiefs was the celebrated Stofflet, whom capricious fortune had raised from the situation of game-keeper, to the civil and military command of a province. Never had the Vendéans, since the commencement of the war, seen an army so numerous, nor so well supplied with arms and artillery. The enemy could enter Thouars only by two bridges, which were ordered to be cut, and by a ford, situated below the village of Verine. Quétineau had occupied this post with the best of his troops, and the remainder of his army was drawn up in line of battle, about the distance of a cannon shot from the walls of the town. His army was composed of about six thousand men, all determined to perform their duty: the event of the battle evinced the folly of this arrangement. At six o'clock in the morning, Thouars was attacked, and a numerous column of the Vendéans advanced to the above-mentioned ford. The republicans resisted successfully this attack, and



and would without doubt have maintained the post, had they received timely assistance, and likewise if the cavalry of Bonchamps had not swam across the river, and taken them in flank. This movement threw the patriotic party into confusion, and nearly half of them fell at the post they had so bravely defended. The enemy, masters of the passage, pushed forward to the walls, whilst Stofflet by a false attack on the new bridge, kept in check a part of Quétineau's force. This general displayed more coolness on the above occasion than he did at the battle of Aubiers. Followed by a part of his army, he spared the rebels half the road, and a battle ensued, the fate of which hung doubtful for several hours. At length the Vendéans, who were in much greater numbers, by extending their front, formed a kind of semicircle, and hemmed in the republicans, who, pressed on all sides, retreated fighting, but were in the end compelled to fly for safety into the ramparts of the town. The general had preserved his courage and coolness during the action, but the instant he perceived his men falling back on all sides, he was confused, and instead of directing the retreat towards Loudon and Poitiers, he gave no orders, but shut himself up in the town, which was carried by assault in about  
an

an hour after. The general, the army, the artillery, and all the ammunition, fell into the hands of the victors.

Whoever shall hereafter write the history of the Vendée, will no doubt examine whether this general sold his army to the insurgent leaders, and will consider the reasons for and against this charge. This much I will say, that the treason does not appear to me probable, or at least, if Quétineau did betray his country, he was certainly the most stupid of all traitors \*.

In the Lower Vendée the success of the insurgents was by no means so brilliant †. Charette

\* If Quétineau betrayed his country, he must have been influenced by two motives, either by the hopes of gain, or by the desire of overturning the Republic, for no person after all would become a traitor without a prospect of benefit. Had the treason been successful, he ought to have received his reward, or enlisted under the banners of the enemy. Nevertheless, the instant he escaped from the hands of the royalists, he presented himself to Santerre, to the military commissions, in the midst of the clubs most bent on his destruction, demanding above all an examination of his conduct, and delivering himself into the hands of his judges. I would ask any man of honor if this is the conduct of a traitor?

† See Note, No. I.

had

had to contend with a formidable army, which palsied all his efforts. The only exploit of the Vendean army was the capture of Machecoul, and which victory was sullied by the most unexampled cruelty : they basely massacred all their prisoners ; and fathers of families, who were unarmed, were slaughtered without mercy. This atrocious as well as impolitic conduct, gave this struggle the character of a war of extermination \*.

Notwithstanding what was asserted at the time by the Jacobins, the leaders in the Upper Vendée were far from imitating such horrible conduct. Not a citizen was massacred, not a woman violated, and in a town taken by storm, the Vendéans only took what was necessary for their subsistence, and committed no excess, except in the article of wine.

Charette, in the mean time, closely pressed by the republican army which was posted at Fontenay, dared not undertake any measure of consequence, but immediately on hearing of the success of the battle of Thouars, requested the chiefs of the Upper Vendée to come to his assistance. These, therefore,

† See Note, No. II.

commenced

commenced their march and directed their course towards Parthenay, the gates of which town were thrown open to them; the next day, they marched to Chataignerie, where four thousand republicans determined to await them, but who overwhelmed by superior forces; had soon reason to repent their temerity. The next day, the conquerors were joined by Charrette, and both armies marched against Fontenay. Here the engagement was renewed; the republicans though inferior in numbers, but having the advantage of position, drove back the insurgents, and attacking them both in front and on their flanks, gained in the space of two hours a complete victory. The Vendéans, panic struck, fled on all sides in disorder; a single officer, by a prodigious effort, saved two pieces of cannon; the rest of the artillery fell into the hands of the conquerors. This defeat, however, instead of abating, only served to inflame the courage of their principal leaders, and in a few days, Lescures, Laroche-Jaquelin, Bonchamps, and other chiefs, again appeared with an army under the walls of Fontenay. The republicans fought desperately, but the Vendéans opposing them with equal fury, victory at length crowned their efforts. Fontenay \*

\* See Note, No. III.

was taken, a great part of the patriotic army was surrounded, and all its artillery and ammunition fell into the hands of the rebels. France now saw for the first time, that she had an enemy in the Vendée more formidable than the greater part of the coalesced powers.

The capture of Fontenay spread terror through the capital, and the Convention even sent their grenadiers to oppose the rebels, who, taking advantage of the victory, marched immediately towards Niort. The capture of this place was attended with the most alarming consequences, for the insurrection might not only spread through the interior provinces, but the communication with Rochelle and Rochefort was entirely cut off; and the English might have attacked these two ports with impunity\*. The insurgents meanwhile were not more than two leagues distant from Niort, the fall of which seemed to be inevitable, when it was saved by one of those incidents which although common in war, so completely baffle all calculations, that the most experienced agree to give them the name of Fortune.

On leaving Thouars, D'Elbée had been created

\* See Note, No. IV.

Generalissimo\*, and to bring order out of confusion, he appointed persons with the titles of commanders of cantonments. A few days after the departure of the Vendean army, a body of three thousand men, commanded by General Salomon, arrived at Thouars, from whence his numerous detachments spread themselves over the insurgent country, and caused universal alarm. In order to check these advanced parties, the commandant of Argenton had collected a body of two thousand Vendean at La Fougereuse and expected every day to be attacked; but finding that the enemy remained quietly at their post, and beginning to experience a scarcity of provisions, he was obliged to disband this weak army: keeping with him about four hundred men, the greater part of whom were armed only with pikes†. General Salomon,

\* The first person on whom this title was conferred, was Cathelineau, a waggoner of Pin-en-mange, near Saint Florent.

† Carra for a long time insisted that the pike was superior to the fusil, and said the latter was merely a kind of perfected sling. Delighted with this paradox, the Jacobin government expended millions of livres on the manufacture of these arms, which soon fell into disgrace; they were then piled up in the magazines, and served for the soldiers to laugh at. The Vendean chiefs took some thousands of them, and not having a sufficient quantity of muskets, armed a part of the insurgents.



informed of this circumstance by his spies, fell on a sudden upon La Fougereuse, and, after a slight skirmish, took it. The commandant of Argenton, fearing the conqueror would take advantage of his victory to fall upon Chatillon, dispatched messenger after messenger to the generalissimo to demand speedy assistance. On the other hand, news arriving that Ligonier, who was posted at Doué, was making daily incursions upon Vitriers, and menacing Chollet, D'Elbée summoned a council, in which it was resolved to abandon the conquest of Niort, and go to the relief of the invaded country. The general rendezvous was accordingly fixed at Chatillon, and the army was disbanded.

A few days after, fifty thousand men, with the most intrepid of the leaders at their head, marched from Chatillon, and directed their course towards Doué. Ligonier seeing the storm ready to burst upon him, demanded succours from the republican army posted at Saumur; and full of confidence determined to try the chance of arms; but completely defeated, he was left to repent the precipitation into which his courage had drawn him. The next day, the victorious army bent its course towards Saumur.

This



This celebrated town, independant of the advantage of its situation, was defended by a very numerous army, partly composed of the battalions and troops of the line, the greater part of whom had never been engaged with the Vendéans, and who, full of confidence, were anxious to cope with them. Some of their generals were men of talents, but the greater number were chosen from the Jacobin club, and better fitted for making motions, than facing an enemy. A few ineffective plans were, however, combined, some fortifications hastily raised, and advantageous posts were taken, and the division of General Salomon was ordered to the relief of the menaced town. This tardy measure was attended with the most disastrous consequences. The Vendéans hearing of Salomon's march, detached a part of their forces to Montreuil, and advanced with the remainder upon Saumur. Deceived by the incorrect accounts of his spies, the general fell into the centre of the Vendean column, and after fighting three hours, left the half of his army on the field of battle, and the rest escaped under cover of the night to Thouars.

Meanwhile the two armies were fighting with the greatest fury before Saumur, and the Vendéans,

deans, thrice repulsed, as often returned to the charge. It was at this battle that men armed only with heavy bludgeons, were seen rushing with fury upon the cannon, and seizing them. The republicans, broke, formed instantly again, and presented a rampart of bayonets to the enemy: a regiment of cuirassiers was advancing with impetuosity upon the rebels, when, attacked in flank by a body of men under Domagné, they were forced to retreat. The victory remained doubtful, until the Vendéans, learning the issue of the battle of Montreuil, and reinforced by that army, made another charge, which decided the battle in their favour. The republicans, pressed on all sides, retreated into Saumur, but the disorder became so general, that the place was taken\*.

Few battles have been more bloody than this of Saumur; the two armies fought with the greatest fury, and the Vendean chiefs signalized themselves by prodigies of valor. Lescures was wounded in leading his troops to the charge, and Domagné was killed in repulsing the cuirassiers.

\* See Note, No. V.

liers. While they were yet fighting at the entrance of the town, the intrepid Laroche-Jaquelin, hurried on by his impetuosity, and accompanied only by one officer, penetrated into the grand square of Saumur.

Where is the Frenchman who would not have gloried in those heroic actions, if they had been directed against the common enemy, against the foreigners who at that time were marching to invade our country? Alcibiades and Coriolanus among the ancients, and Walsstein and Condé in modern times, have fought against their country, but the historian, whilst he condemns their errors, renders justice to their valorous deeds.

The Vendéans obtained by the victory of Saumur, a considerable quantity of artillery and ammunition, as well as high reputation\*. It was asserted at the time, that if the victorious army had taken the route to Paris, they might have gained possession of it, and changed the government. I leave the decision of that question to military men, observing only that it was never

\* See Note, No. VI.

my opinion\*. However that may be, this victory raised the Vendée to the highest pitch of glory. A few days after this battle, Angers threw open its gates; the example of this town was followed by all the towns situated on the Loire; and this torrent would have overwhelmed the whole of the western provinces of France, had not Nantes opposed a barrier, against which all its efforts were unavailing.

This town, advantageously situated, had a numerous garrison and an able general to defend it. Canclaux, learning experience by the defeat at Saumur, instead of trusting to the chance of a battle, prudently kept himself within the ramparts. From a lofty dome he saw at one glance the preparations of the enemy, their different points of attack, and by the succours which he dispatched, he succeeded in rendering all their efforts useless. This wise conduct obtained its

\* When we reflect on the internal resources of Paris, the vicinity of the army of the North, the great number of national guards, added to the difficulties which an undisciplined army, without provisions or ammunition, would meet with on the road, we must agree that under all these circumstances, the taking of the capital was highly improbable.

desired

desired success. The Vendean army, excellent for a *coup-de-main*, understood nothing about sieges; besides, not having sufficient artillery, ammunition, and provisions, they were unable to remain for any length of time in the same camp. They had also another disadvantage; Charrette posted with twenty thousand men on the other side of the Loire, and stopped by a numerous train of artillery placed upon a bridge at about half a league distance, was unable to form his junction, and was consequently useless. Notwithstanding all these obstacles, the Vendean by mere impetuosity had carried part of the suburbs, when they were obliged to fly to the defence of the country behind them, which was attacked by General Westermann. This event, and the prudence of General Canclaux, preserved a city to France, the capture of which would have been attended with the most fatal consequences. I shall speak more at length of Westermann's expedition hereafter.

After the battle of Saumur, Lescures, who was wounded, retired to his house at Clisson; some hostile movements, however, had called him again to the field and led him to forget his wounds. After meeting with a few checks, he reached Parthenay with ten thousand men. Wes-

termann was then at St. Maixent with a division, the flower of which were drawn from the Northern legion. This daring general, confiding in his courage, undertook to surprise the enemy in Parthenay, which, in spite of the vigilance of Lescures, perfectly succeeded. The insurgents, attacked during the night, made but a feeble resistance, and fled in disorder. Lescures himself owed his escape to the darkness of the night. This success gave fresh spirits to Westermann, who was certainly more dreaded by the rebels than any of the other generals, and who in fact did them the most mischief. He had that kind of valour, which was suited to this war. Instead of meditating plans, or digesting projects, he took no other counsellor than opportunity ; and justified the revolutionary axiom, that every thing consists in daring exertions.

Lescures, having withdrawn to his estate, endeavoured in vain to collect his scattered forces, but Westermann would not allow him time to breathe. The next morning, he appeared under the walls of his chateau, and it was not till two days after, that, by the light of the flames which were consuming his possessions, he at length assembled six thousand men at Chatillon. The  
republican



republican General meanwhile marched against this town, and Lescures flew to its assistance. The two parties assembled upon a height, called *le Bois du Moulin aux Chèvres*. The Vendéans sustained the first attack of the enemy, but Westermann, followed by his cavalry, spread every where confusion and death. The Vendéans having fled on all sides, the conqueror entered Chatillon in triumph. While this General was meditating new conquests, he was informed that Laroche-Jaquelin was in fight with an army: he treated, however, these reports with contempt, until the sound of the cannon convinced him of their reality. In vain he summoned up his courage; the Vendéans fell with fury on the Republicans, who thrown into disorder and pressed on all sides, took flight. The daring Westermann was compelled to put spurs to his horse, and escape from the place which he had the same evening triumphantly entered. The two wings of his army remained on the field of battle, or were made prisoners\*.

Such was the issue of an enterprize, which had been planned in opposition to all received military

\* See Note, No. VII.



maxims, and which occasioned to France the loss of multitudes of brave men : it was attended however with two very considerable advantages : the first was, that it made a powerful diversion, and brought up an army from Brittany which would have ravaged the country ; and secondly, it opened to the Republicans the road to Chatillon, and abated somewhat of the extravagant hopes, and lessened the presumption of the enemy.

## CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1793.

FORTUNE was equally propitious to the insurgents in the Lower Vendée. Charrette had several times defeated the divisions commanded by Beysser and Sandoz, but these reverses had not in the least damped the courage of the republicans\*. As no place of importance had been the fruit of these victories, Charrette, to give éclat to his party, advanced against the town of Sables, which, defended by a brave garrison, resisted all his efforts, and of which, after several useless attacks, he was obliged to raise the siege. To repair this disgrace, he resolved to give battle

\* The reader will perceive that I do not enter into so precise a detail of the operations of Charrette, as of the chiefs of the Upper Vendée. I will frankly declare, I have not sufficient documents of this army of the insurgents to allow me to enter at length into its history.

to the republican army encamped at Luçon. Situated in the midst of marshes, and defended by an army, this town appeared to him no easy conquest. In order, therefore, not to expose himself to another repulse, he requested the assistance of the neighbouring armies. Sapineau, who commanded what the Vendéans termed the centre, and who had gained some advantages on his side, marched to his assistance with a chosen body of men, more brave, however, than numerous, and Laroche-Jaquelin also joined him with a detachment of twelve thousand men. These united forces marched towards Luçon, and engaged the republicans. Charrette defeated the wing which was opposed to him, and victory seemed assured to the Vendéans, when two incidents turned it in favour of the patriots. The first was the skill and good conduct of the brave Leconte, commander of the third battallion of Deux Sèvres, who being surrounded by the rebels, formed his troops into a square, remained more than an hour exposed to the fire of the enemy, and gave time to the remainder of the army to relieve him, and recommence the battle. The other was the panic which displayed itself among the troops commanded by Laroche-Jaquelin, who, without being pushed by the enemy, fled, and dispersed themselves.

themselves. The General, hurried away by the fugitives, found himself obliged to abandon the field of battle, and a victory which had appeared decided.

If we may believe the Vendean chiefs, the cause of this sudden terror was a popular tradition, which I think beneath the dignity of an historian to record.

Ashamed of the precipitate flight of the grand army, the title by which the divisions of Chatillon and Chollet were then known, Charrette retired in a state of despondency, with the most profound contempt for such marks of genuine cowardice. The rivalry which began to rise in his mind against his colleagues, took deeper root, and attributing to their jealousy what was only the effect of terror, he never forgave them for this defeat.

Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, who had fallen back on Chatillon, met with fresh reverses. A new republican army formed of the remains of that of Saumur, and of troops arrived from the North, had regained Saumur, Angers, and all  
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the towns which had been taken by the Vendéans\*. General Bonchamps had been defeated by the republicans in attempting to oppose their progress. Laroche-Jaquelin, D'Elbée, and Lescures, had hastily collected a body of fifteen thousand men†, and with these, added to the remains of the army of Bonchamps, had marched to meet the enemy, who had advanced as far as Martigné Briant. The principal strength of the Vendean army consisted in a body of twelve hundred men, composed of six hundred Swiss and Germans, of the Germanic legion, who after the defeat at Saumur, had taken arms in favour of the royalists, and of six hundred of the bravest of the Vendéans who had served before in different regiments. This select body rendered the greatest service to the Vendée, and always continued faithful to its cause.

\* It was much easier for the insurgents to take towns than to keep them. The instant the chiefs set off upon any expedition, every soldier wished to follow, and it was impossible to keep them in garrison. Although the post of Saumur was of the greatest importance to the Vendéans, and although D'Elbée had left fifteen hundred men to guard it, they were obliged to abandon it five days after its conquest, the commandant having found, upon muster, that he had not more than sixty men fit to bear arms.

† See Notes, Nos. VIII. and IX.

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The two armies soon came up with each other, near Martigné, and after skirmishing, began a regular fire which was kept up on both sides with success. The ninth regiment of hussards made an advance, and Laroche-Jaquelin marched to meet them, at the head of his cavalry. Each party expected to come to close quarters, in which, however, they were disappointed, as the Vendéans, oppressed with heat and thirst, retired the first, and took a position at Vitriers, situated three leagues from the field of battle. This affair therefore, was looked on as a mere skirmish. Laroche-Jaquelin and the other chiefs, had promised Charrette to meet him the next day on the banks of the Sèvre, to consult with him on the means of repairing the check at Luçon.

Not thinking the enemy intended another attack, they set off, and promised the soldiers that they would hasten their return, but desired them not to give battle to the enemy in their absence. This imprudence had nearly been attended with the most fatal consequences to the Vendée; for the patriots having learnt that the principal leaders of the enemy were absent, advanced rapidly upon Vitriers, and suddenly attacked the affrighted royalists, who would have been inevitably cut off, had

not Kester, the German whom I have mentioned, taken upon himself the command. With a select corps which he headed, he threw himself in the way of the enemy who was rapidly advancing, and by means of a well supported and well directed fire, kept them in check. The example of this brave man encouraged the Vendéans, and they rushed with furious yells upon the republican columns, which, badly posted, and having little extent of front, fought to great disadvantage. At length, after two hours of alternate success and defeat, victory declared in favour of the Vendean army. Few routs were ever more complete; ten pieces of cannon, all the covered waggons and baggage fell into the hands of the enemy. The republican general, closely pursued by a daring fellow, named Loiseau, escaped only by scaling a wall eight feet high; such was the success of the battle of Vitriers, one of the most complete that the insurgents had yet gained. The royalist chiefs, on hearing the report of the cannon, hastened their return, but reached the spot only to be witnesses of the victory. This success rendered the Vendéans for several months masters of the country, and this was almost the only advantage which they derived from it.

Meanwhile



Meanwhile Charrette waited impatiently with his troops for the succours which had been promised him. Laroche-Jaquelin, Lescures, and D'Elbée soon joined him with a body of more than twenty thousand men, and they all marched towards Luçon. The republicans, elevated by their first success, flew to engage them. At the first onset, the grand Vendean army was again seized with the same panic, and the greater part of the royalists fled without even seeing the enemy, and left them a complete victory. This battle, which was fought on the 25th of August, 1793, was remarkable for an engagement between the Vendean cavalry and the ninth regiment of hussars, who repulsed the insurgents. The Vendean, however, were so little galled in their retreat, that they formed their camp at three leagues from the field of battle, from whence, five days afterwards, they marched to try their fortune for the third time ; after a battle of two hours, the royalists were completely routed, and soon discovered that Luçon, defended by the courage of republicans, and not less by the defection of their panic-struck warriors, was become impregnable.

The republicans, after this decisive victory, scoured the enemy's country, and after having searched in vain for Charrette, took post at Chantonnay. Charrette, closely pursued, was again obliged to have recourse to his neighbours. The council of Chatillon assembled, and their opinions were for some time divided : at length, it was agreed that D'Elbée and Laroche-Jacquelin should march an army to the relief of Charrette, whilst Lescures, with a division, guarded the district of Chatillon. This project was put into execution : on the fourth of September, D'Elbée advanced towards the Lower Vendée, formed a junction with Charrette, and after a few days march, came within view of the enemy. So often witnesses of the cowardice of their adversaries, the republicans prepared themselves only for a feeble attack, and considered their victory as decisive. But the panic which had seized the royalists at Chantonnay had subsided : the fugitives of Luçon had recovered their spirits, and rushing with fury upon the enemy, overthrew them in every direction. The republicans, surprised \* and indignant, were put to flight,

\* The Vendéans owed their victory to a mistake of the republican General, who so little expected to be attacked, that  
he

flight, and obliged to abandon a victory which, at first sight, seemed secure\*.

While this engagement was taking place at Chantonnay, Lescures, posted in the Upper Vendée, did not remain idle. At the head of a division, he continually harrassed his adversaries, and sometimes threatened Parthenay, and at other times Airvault and Thouars.

General Rey occupied Airvault with a kind of flying camp, and knowing that Lescures was posted at Saint Loup, marched to meet him. For two hours, each side kept up a brisk cannonade; but the insurgents at length having expended their powder, their courage forsook them, and they abandoned the field, strewed more with wooden shoes than killed and wounded†.

Meantime, the representatives of the people who accompanied the army of the West, anxious,

he was at the same time at some distance from his camp: his army was therefore surprised, but not one of the soldiers took to flight, until they had expended all their cartridges.

\* See Note, No. X.

† See Note, No. XI.

whatever it might cost, to put an end to this civil war, had taken what they then termed a grand measure, but which ought rather to have been called a false and foolish one. Presuming that nothing was so fitted to crush the mass of insurgents as to bring against it a mass of people still more numerous, they had summoned from several neighbouring departments all men from the age of eighteen to fifty\*. Such a mass, badly armed, and still more badly disciplined, could not be of the least utility. In consequence of the orders of these representatives, sixty thousand men assembled at Thouars; when Lescures on receiving intelligence, conceived the daring project of dissipating this undisciplined rabble, and even proposed to effect it with two thousand men.

By a skilful manœuvre, he directed his column towards Airvault, which General Rey, uncertain of the real point of attack, and not daring to quit, had taken measures to defend. On a sudden, Lescures wheeled off towards Thouars, and before night, was within two leagues of this town\*,

\* See Note, No. XII.

† This attack took place the 14th September, 1793.

which

which would have been taken, if he could have persuaded the Vendéans to have made an immediate attack ; but as among the prejudices of these people is this, that nothing ought to be undertaken in darkness, there was no means of making them march forwards, and this delay saved the town.

During these operations Lescures was informed that a reinforcement of four thousand men was rapidly advancing, and had already reached Aubiers. Instead of waiting the arrival of these succours, the General, convinced that the success of his enterprize depended entirely on the rapidity with which it was executed, advanced at break of day upon Thouars : in less than an hour the bridge of Verine was carried, and the plain covered with fugitives. Thouars would have fallen a second time into the hands of the insurgents, had not General Rey, who had received news of its danger the preceding evening, suddenly appeared with a division of regular troops. The fight of this second army determined Lescures to fall back, which he did before the enemy, and made the only orderly retreat the Vendéans had yet effected. A piece of cannon, and a few prisoners were the only fruits of the victory. Lescures, however,  
gained

gained two advantages from his defeat; the first was the breaking up of the mass which threatened the Vendée, and the second, inspiring his soldiers with fresh courage.

So many battles lost or won, had disciplined the Vendéans to such a point that I do not think I affirm too much, in saying, that they would have been invincible, had they been led against any other enemy.

The Dutch who had resisted all the efforts of Philip II. and the Americans who shook off the English yoke, with infinitely greater means, never displayed so much courage and perseverance. But if the Vendéans on the one side performed prodigies of valour, the French displayed more energy and created more resources than either the English or Spaniards. If twenty thousand men were slain in one battle, forty thousand, no less disciplined, immediately took their place, and these in their turn were succeeded by a still greater number, rising in proportion to the loss.

An event, which at first sight did not appear in any degree to interest the Vendée, was, however,



ever, the cause of its ruin. Mentz and Valenciennes having surrendered to the coalesced powers, the convention, by a decree, ordered the garrisons of these towns to march into the Vendée. Several corps had already been drafted from the army of the North, of which twenty-five battalions had been formed under the name of *la formation d'Orleans*; these troops, though disciplined, had not been able to terminate the dispute. In the hopes that the soldiers of those garrisons would be more successful, they were sent down in carriages by post horses, for greater expedition, from Paris, and the cause of the Republic was, as it were, entrusted to the courage and patriotism of these new champions.

The representatives of the people and the generals were at length convinced of the absurdity of raising the people *en masse*, and, after various deliberations, had agreed to act upon a new and better formed plan, the execution of which could not fail of being attended with complete success. Two armies, composed of the heroes of Mentz, of soldiers of the North, and old troops, were ordered to attack Charrette, on two points at the same time, and pursue him as far as Chollet; whilst another army, commanded by General Chalbos, was ap-  
L. pointed



pointed to march into the midst of the Upper Vendée, attack and carry Chatillon, and effect their junction with the two other armies. Several flying camps were to make diversions, harrafs the enemy, and favor the march of the armies. To intimidate the Vendéans, the army was provided with howitzers, a species of artillery so much the more terrible to the enemy, as they were entirely ignorant of its effect. I ought here to remark, that the Vendean artillery, though badly served, had a great superiority over that of the republicans. The insurgents marching continually, and fighting like light infantry, were but very little incommoded by the field pieces, while the republican troops, marching in columns and fighting in close ranks, had often whole fields swept away by a single discharge. This circumstance gave the Vendéans also a great advantage in the use of their musketry; the file and platoon firing of their adversaries killed very few of their men, whilst their muskets loaded with four and five balls, and levelled at the object, made dreadful havoc in the close ranks of their enemies.

These well planned projects would have insured the conquest of the Vendée; which would have  
been

been lost without resource had all the wheels of so vast and complicated a machine been put in motion at the same time.

It was about this time, that the English, who were anxious to add fuel to this dreadful conflagration, and who rejoiced at our calamities, dispatched an emissary to Chatillon. Presented to the civil tribunal, formed by the Vendean Generals, and known under the name of the Superior Council, he offered them, in the name of the English Government, both men and money. I have been informed by one of those who was present at this Council, that a great number of its members were averse to the project of receiving the English. Love for their country, and national hatred towards their ancient enemies, had yet some influence on their minds, and they returned vague answers to the emissary, without any positive assurances\*.

Meantime the plan which we have mentioned, began to be put into execution. The republican forces marched in two columns against Charrette, defeated him in two or three skirmishes, and took

\* See Note, No. XIII.

from him all his artillery ; in a word, they obliged him to fly the country, accompanied by twelve thousand disarmed and discouraged followers.

Charrette, like a skilful commander, directed his retreat towards the Upper Vendée, which had not yet been attacked, and, having taken post at Tiffanges, sent courier after courier to the Superior Council, to give them notice of his situation, and to demand instant assistance. Thirty thousand men, commanded by Lescures, Laroche-Jaquin, and D'Elbée, joined him in his camp. The same day, they were informed that the division from Mentz, commanded by Kleber, ardent in the pursuit of Charrette, was posted at Torfou. The combined forces of the Vendéans marched towards this division, but found it drawn up in admirable order. The two armies remained facing each other, and making their respective observations; the Mayençais had hitherto fought only with Charrette, and thought that he was the only enemy they had to contend with. At the sight of these new uniforms which they had never seen\*, they felt the same sort of surprize as

Asdrubal

\* In order for the reader to comprehend this passage,

Afdrubal at the sight of the old bucklers of the army of Nero. The presence, however, of this reinforcement did not abate their courage, for after a few skirmishes, they began the attack, and made such a vigorous onset, that at the first shock, the Vendean army was thrown into disorder, and some of the troops took to immediate flight. This battle would have decided the fate of the Vendée, had not Lescures and the other generals, who well knew the importance of this day, alighted from their horses, seized muskets and placed themselves at the head of the French company. Thus armed and seconded by a handful of intrepid followers, they supported the enemies shock, and by this manuvre concealed a part of the disorder of their army. Meanwhile the Vendean cavalry had rallied the fugitives, who, finding they were not pursued, took courage and advanced with resolution against the enemy. For more than seven hours the victory which was warmly disputed hung doubtful; at length, the Mayençais, almost surrounded, decided on withdrawing from the field, which they effected in good order, presenting

he should be informed, that the soldiers of Charrette wore uniforms of a brown colour, and those of the Upper Vendée of a grey blue.

at

at times a formidable front to the enemy. The Vendéans, little accustomed to such kinds of retreat, followed ardent in the pursuit, but without making any impression. A division attempted in vain to cut off their retreat; three times they were charged by the Vendean cavalry, who were as often driven back, and the bravest of the assailants made to repent their temerity. For nearly six leagues, the fight was kept up without retarding in the least the retreat of the Mayençais; at length they reached a bridge upon the Sèvre, near Clifton, and having planted on it two pieces of cannon, they compelled their pursuers to retreat in their turn.

Such was the result of the celebrated battle of Torfou, which cost the Mayençais much blood, but whose valour and address excited the admiration even of their enemies. I have heard several Vendéans speak with enthusiasm and respect of this army, and regret the loss of so many brave men with a sentiment of grief and admiration. The Vendéans this day took several pieces of cannon, and a great quantity of ammunition; but the greatest advantage which they reaped from it, was that of raising the courage of their terrified partisans: the plan which the patriots had so wisely combined

combined was also overthrown by this event, which had nearly proved fatal to the republican cause.

The victorious army lay that night at Tiffanges, where a council of war was held, and in which the Vendean chiefs, particularly Lescures, after commenting on the courage and skill of the Mayençais, declared their opinion, that this army would one day prove the ruin of the Vendée, and that therefore they ought not to hesitate a moment in extirpating a corps, which singly had been more formidable to them than all the battles of their other adversaries. To insure success, they dispatched a courier to Bonchamps, who was stationed near Chollet with a body of eight thousand men, and ordered him to march on the 21st towards Clifton, and attack the Mayençais in rear, whilst they themselves, with their whole force, attacked them in front.

Had this plan been put in execution, there is reason to believe, that in spite of their bravery, the Mayençais would have been totally destroyed\*; but an incident deranged all these projects which

† See Note, No. XIV.



had been combined according to all the rules of war, and which caused the plan for the ruin of the army of Mentz to turn to its advantage. On the 20th Charrette received a courier by which he learned that Montaigu had been carried by the republicans, and that another party, posted at St. Fulgent, was ravaging his country. Warmly pressed by his officers and soldiers, he assembled the council again, and declared to the chiefs of the Upper Vendée that he could not join in the expedition of Clifton, that the interest of his country required his presence, and that he was about to march. Lescures and D'Elbée attempted in vain to show him the ill consequences and danger of such a step; he remained inexorable, and only promised them, that as soon as he had driven the enemy from his country, he would join his forces to their army, and help them to extirpate the Mayençais. Finding it impossible to retain him, and not thinking themselves sufficiently strong to attack so brave and well posted an enemy, the chiefs of the Upper Vendée determined to march to the relief of Montaigu\*. The republican army

\* The only precaution taken by the generalissimo D'Elbée, was to send a counter-order to Bonchamps, the courier of which



army, posted before this town, was not in sufficient force to make a stand against the conquerors of Torfou. A number of soldiers who were out plundering, had not even time to rejoin it, and in less than half an hour Montaigu was retaken, the republicans were defeated, and their artillery, baggage waggons, and ammunition fell into the hands of the rebels. The carnage in Montaigu was dreadful, and all the prisoners were massacred; a part of the army, however, succeeded in escaping to Nantes.

Of three bodies of troops which had entered the Lower Vendée, one had been vigorously repulsed, the second beaten and completely dispersed, and the third remained posted at St. Fulgent. This army, if not the most formidable, was at least the most numerous; and in possession of the most considerable park of artillery, among which were included those dreadful howitzers, the effect of which was unknown to the Vendéans, and on which the republicans founded their hopes of victory.

which was taken and put to death by the republicans; this was the cause of the check which Bonchamps received a few days after, as the reader will have occasion to observe.

Previous to the attack of the enemy at St. Fulgent, the Vendean chiefs held a council, and resolved on measures so well concerted, that, had they been put in execution, not a tenth part of this army would have escaped. Charrette sent an order to the commandant of Herbiers, to march with his whole division to the four ways, and remain in ambuscade until the republican army should pass him; he was then to take them in the rear, while the combined armies attacked them in front and on both flanks. The republicans were indebted to a mistake for their safety, for Charrette had given notice, that the battle would take place in the morning; but from delays unavoidable in such circumstances, it did not commence until the evening\*. The commandant of Herbiers, tired, therefore, of waiting, thought proper to return to his station, and wait for new orders.

At sun-set the two armies came within fight of each other; several of the Vendean chiefs

\* The battle commenced an hour before sun-set, and lasted the greater part of the night. Although the Vendean were very much prepossessed against nocturnal combats, in this instance they fought with the greatest courage.

wished

wished to put off the battle until the morrow, but the majority were of a contrary opinion, and were resolved to take advantage of the short remains of day-light to commence the attack. Emboldened by their two former victories, the Vendean army entertained no doubt of success, and the army of their adversaries, full of confidence in the use of their numerous artillery, figured to itself a complete triumph. During two hours, each kept up a most dreadful fire ; but the patriotic army was too disadvantageously posted, not to feel its fatal effects.

The darkness was favourable only to the Vendéans, for the republican cannoneers knew not where to point their pieces, whilst the Vendéans, posted at fifty paces from the open camp of the enemy, and concealed behind the hedges, kept up a most destructive fire of musketry. The dreadful howitzers, meantime, thundered in every direction, but the rebels, scattered about according to their usual custom, and to use their expression, “ beating round the bushes,” were not intimidated. They felt, indeed, some movements of surprise, but it was not attended with any terror, and they continued to fight with their accustomed fury. I have heard several Vendéans who were in the

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engagement,

engagement, and who could not comprehend any thing of the parabolic descent of these formidable howitzers, speak of those murderous guns, as of an infernal machine, the invention of which was something superhuman. For six hours the battle had raged with undiminished fury on both sides; the confusion inseparable from a nocturnal fight, prevailed equally in both armies, but the disorder was infinitely more detrimental to the republicans than to their enemies, who were never accustomed to keep any order, and of whom each one chose his own position. The former, perceiving by the flashes of the muskets that they were nearly surrounded, were anxious to make good their retreat. The republican generals did every thing that courage and experience could achieve to stop the disorder, and renew the engagement; their efforts failed, and the rout became general. The whole of the ammunition, cannon, and even the howitzers, fell into the hands of the conquerors.

The victorious army pursued the enemy closely, and made a great slaughter of the fugitives: in addition to their bad fortune, the commandant of Herbiers, informed of the engagement by the cannonade,

cannonade, and dreading the reproaches of Charrette, assembled with great expedition three hundred cavalry, and reached the four ways half an hour after the action, where he fell upon the stragglers, of whom he killed a great number. Such would have been the fate of the whole republican army, had the four thousand men whom he had placed in ambuscade the evening before, remained there fifteen hours longer.

After having thus re-established Charrette, and placed him in a flourishing condition, the grand army took leave and returned back to their positions, where they did not long enjoy the repose they had promised themselves.

The chiefs, on arriving at Chatillon, were informed of the defeat of Bonchamps, and were loaded with the most bitter reproaches by this general. The cause of this defeat was as follows: we have already seen that Lescures, about to attack the Mayençais at Clifton, had invited Bonchamps to make an attack, and take the enemy in rear. Charrette having by his precipitation deranged this plan, a courier had been sent to Chollet to inform the Vendean general of the new arrangement

ment which had taken place. This courier by accident fell into the hands of a republican party, who conducted him to the Mayençais ; and from his examination they were apprised not only of the march and intention of the enemy, but discovered the means of exterminating the army of Bonchamps. The latter, ignorant of the new plans which had been adopted, advanced on the 21<sup>st</sup> to attack the enemy, and not being seconded by the army as he expected, was completely defeated. This reverse, however, excited less astonishment in the council of Chatillon, than the news of the march of General Chalbos towards that town. Different circumstances had retarded the march of his army ; with greater diligence he had prevented the three defeats I have just mentioned : this delay, however, must not be imputed to Chalbos, an officer of acknowledged merit. If we may credit several republican officers, the fault was in the representatives of the people, whose various arretés was often in direct opposition to the plans of the Generals, and occasioned prejudicial delays\*.

This

\* Many of the representatives sent to the army had wisdom enough not to interfere in matters of which they were ignorant,

This army, disengaged at length from the shackles by which it had been so long encumbered, marched upon Chatillon, carrying desolation and death in its passage. It was commanded by three generals, distinguished alike by their courage and their talents ; these were Chalbos, Chabot, and Westermann. On the news of this march, Lescures, D'Elbée, and Laroche-Jaquelin hastily collected their troops, and, at the head of the conquerors of St. Fulgent, waited for the enemy on the heights of Chatillon, where, after a few skirmishes, they made dispositions for a general engagement. If I may give credit to what several of the Vendean chiefs have told me, it was Westermann who was commissioned to range the troops in order of battle ; which operation was confided to him, as he was supposed to know the ground better than his colleagues. But this he executed very ill, having posted the republican troops in a valley beneath the heights occupied by the insurgents ; consequently, during the whole engagement, they fought under great disadvantage. The action began by a brisk cannonade, but the armies soon after coming to

norant, but the greater numbers continually tormented the generals, thwarted their plans, and were in vain reminded of the motto, *Ne futor ultra crepidam*.

close



close quarters, a most heavy fire of musquetry silenced the cannon. For three hours the victory was uncertain ; Chalbos and Chabot did every thing that could be expected from their courage and abilities : but however great might be the bravery of this army, it fell far short of the energy and discipline of the Mayençais. Harraßed by the enemy, they could not sustain a brisk charge from a chosen body of troops commanded by Lescures and Laroche-Jaquelin ; but on finding the right wing shaken, and the left entirely broken, they took openly to flight. The conquerors went in pursuit of the enemy, and nothing less than a complete victory was expected, when Westermann, at the head of a body of reserve, fell upon the scattered rebels, of whom he made a considerable havock, and renewed the engagement. Night, however, separated the combatants, and the Vendéans, exhilarated at the advantage they had gained, gave themselves up to inconsiderate mirth. They had taken several carriages laden with brandy, which capture was the cause of their ruin. Extravagantly fond of spirits, they drank to such an excess that the greater part of them fell down in a state of intoxication, without any sense or feeling\*. The

\* This is not the first time that a French army has been destroyed

chiefs strongly represented to them, that the enemy was near, and might surprise them ; no attention was paid them, and the soldiers did not leave off drinking until the barrels were entirely empty.

Meanwhile, Westermann, on the information of his spies, led his division to the spot, and, at the head of fifteen hundred picked men, presented himself before the gates of Chatillon. *Who's there ?* demanded the centinel. *A royalist,* replied he. *Enter !* rejoined the other. He immediately advanced, killed the sentinel, and found the Vendéans lying about the streets, stupid or senseless ; after putting them all to the sword, he set fire to the town, of which he made himself completely master. The chiefs had scarcely time to mount their horses, and escape to Mortagne ; whilst the patriotic army marched by the light of the flames to rejoin Westermann in Chatillon,

destroyed by means of strong liquors. We read in Frédégaire that, under the reign of Clotaire III. fifty thousand French, having crossed the Alps in order to re-establish Pertharite upon the throne of the Lombards, the usurper Grimoald, unwilling to run the risk of a battle, feigned on a sudden to be panic-struck, and retiring with precipitation, left in his camp a part of his baggage, with a considerable number of hogshheads of wine. The French hastening to plunder, swallowed the bait,

The capture of this town had more alarmed than weakened the Vendéans. The bloody battle before mentioned had not decided the quarrel, for the insurgents had even gained an advantage over the republicans.

Recovered from their surprise, they might the next day have collected their forces, and extinguished in the blood of the republicans the fire of Chatillon. Westermann and his colleagues felt so hastily the weakness of their position, that during the night they made good their retreat, and evacuate the town. Their fears were but too well grounded, for in the course of the night, the Vendean chiefs rallied, and marched upon Chatillon. To render their victory more sure, they surrounded the town, and seized on the principal posts; astonished at not finding the enemy, they dreaded a surprise, and sent five hundred men to take possession of one of the gates; they passed, however, without finding any resistance, and the army entered with them.

This place presented a most dreadful spectacle; heaps of half-burnt carcases strewed the streets, and and finished by getting intoxicated and stupified. Grimoald returned in the middle of the night, surprised them asleep, and put them to the sword.

all

all the houses were in a general conflagration. The cries of despair of the inhabitants, who rushed into the midst of the flames to save some of their effects, and the crash of buildings falling into ruins, presented a complete picture of desolation. Not able to endure the sight, the Vendean chiefs made no efforts to stop the progress of the flames, but, filled with rage and despair, instantly set off in pursuit of the enemy ; for after marching several hours, without any hopes of coming up with them, they dismissed the troops, and appointed the rendezvous for the morrow at Mortagne.

I ought to remark on this occasion, that the dreadful plan of burning towns, invented by Robespierre and his partisans, was so much the more absurd, as it did a general injury to the Republic without furthering in the least the end proposed ; on the contrary, the unfortunate inhabitants, whose wives and children had been massacred, whose houses had been destroyed, having no domestic tie, and no other property than their muskets, either gave themselves up to despair, or joined the armies, where only they could gain subsistence, and thus became true soldiers ; so much the more formidable, as nothing was left to them but to revenge themselves, or to die with arms

in their hands. Another consideration ought to have been a sufficient motive for not adopting this absurd system ; the fear of reprisals.

What would have been the fate of Saumur, Angers, Mans, Laval, Dol, and many other flourishing cities where the Vendéans entered in triumph, had not the moderation of the generals preserved these towns from the torch of the incendiary, and complete devastation ; or had they from some blind sentiment of revenge followed the plans of the Jacobins ? who can reflect without horror on the mass of ruins which at this time would have covered a part of France ? this dreadful system, the most fitted to add new horrors and new crimes to the civil war, was either the offspring of patriotism run mad, or of the most consummate and artful wickedness.

Meanwhile, the Vendéans, busy at Mortagne in collecting the flower of their army, were overwhelmed with the most dreadful intelligence. Not only was the army of Chabos marching to drive them from the post they occupied, but two strong republican divisions, drawn from the Lower Vendée, were advancing to take them in rear, threatening at the same time both Tiffauges and Chollet.

Charrette

Charrette by a false combination, had aided the projects of the republicans. Instead of engaging the attention of the armies he had in front, and making a powerful diversion in favour of the grand army on the side of Tiffauges, he engaged in the vain project of seizing Noirmoutiers, and thus abandoned the Upper Vendée to the united efforts of the republicans. The republican generals took advantage of this capital fault, and marched in three columns against the flower of the Vendean forces, fully persuaded that victory soon would deliver them up in succession the Vendée, Charrette, and Noirmoutiers.

The celebrated Westermann was not at this time in the number of generals in service. Robespierre had ordered him to Paris, where he was for some time suspended from his employments, and the brave fellows he had so successfully commanded were thereby deprived of his assistance. At this time, a report was spread, that the Jacobins were desirous of prolonging the civil war, and that they fed the flame. The tyrannical acts of Robespierre leave no doubt on my mind of such being his intention. This monster, jealous of Westermann's merit, and in fact of every other person of ability, seem to  
have



have adopted for himself Tarquin's instructions to his son. The capture of Chatillon was a thunder-stroke to him as well as to the Vendée. He feared that the extinction of the civil war would wrest from him the powerful arm of terror, and deprive him of a pretext for his assassinations and plunders; in a word, the greedy tiger had further need of new victims, that he might riot in their blood, and revel in their spoils\*. Be that as it may, Westermann thus disgraced, might have felt that Robespierre's hatred was the silent preparation of his grave. We shall shortly see to what a length that hatred was carried: at this period he was compelled to resign, being tormented by contradictions and suspicions, which are often more prejudicial to a man of honour than complete disgrace.

Whilst the republican armies were uniting their forces, and preparing to march upon Mortagne, the Vendean leaders held a council, and

\* The observation of the famous Danton, the Coryphée of the Jacobins, is well known. When one of his friends remarked to him that the barbarous laws which daily emanated from the committee, of which he was a member, would strip France of half its land owners: *So much the better*, replied the infuriated demagogue, *we stand in need of a new emission of emigrants.*



tried every measure to avert the storm. Posted between Mortagne and Chollet, they alike defended both towns, which could not be taken except by a battle. Couriers were every day dispatched to hasten the arrival of reinforcements, and officers hastily assembled from all parts, followed by all the soldiers they could muster. Under these circumstances, Bonchamps rejoined the army with a body of ten thousand men, ready to bury themselves under the ashes of the Vendée; not satisfied with these reinforcements, the chiefs sent several messengers to Charrette to inform him of their distress, and provoke a diversion upon Tiffauges. They also took possession of the principal heights, and established detachments upon the most advantageous posts in the vicinity of their camp; upon the whole, they took every precaution necessary to ensure a victory. These dispositions, which were certainly well planned, were rendered of no effect from errors which they afterwards committed. However great might be the confidence of the Vendean chiefs, they could not but reflect, that if routed, they had no point of retreat. Obligated in that case to fall back on the Loire, they thought it would be advantageous at all events to secure the passage of that river, and therefore dispatched four thousand chosen men,

men to seize upon Varades, a town situated on the other side of that river. This plan was executed, and Varades was taken; but independently of the danger they ran in dividing their forces at this crisis, the Vendéans began to lose their courage, and, during the battles of Mortagne and Chollet, all their thoughts were directed towards the river, the passage of which had been prepared for them.

On the 25th of October, 1793, the two armies came within sight of each other. The republicans, commanded by Léchelle and Beaupuy, wore an air of confidence, that was the presage of victory; but the Vendéans on the other side, advanced to the combat like men determined to bury themselves in the ruins of their country. The battle commenced at one o'clock in the afternoon. The two armies rushed upon each other with fury, and victory remained undecided till eleven at night. At that time, the republicans, fatigued by their numerous long marches, began to give way, when Léchelle, taking advantage of the darkness of the night, marched round with his body of reserve, and suddenly fell upon the wing commanded by Lescures. At this unexpected attack, the Vendéans gave way on all sides,

fides, and fled panic-struck to Chollet; Lescures, seeing this disorder, rushed in amongst the fugitives, rallied a part, and led them back upon the enemy. The exertions and example of this brave captain had already in some degree renewed the combat, when he received a mortal wound, and fell in the midst of his men. His officers led him bleeding out of the thickest of the engagement, and conducted him to Beaupreau. The instant the news of his fall spread through the Vendean army, the soldiers lost their courage and fled, leaving the victorious republicans in possession of Mortaigne, and a part of their artillery. The next day Chollet opened its gates. Several generals made vain attempts to prevent the destruction of this flourishing city; their orders were not attended to, and pillage and murder in every quarter rendered the place a scene of horror and desolation: the incendiary torch had already spread through the suburbs, when the noise of cannon was suddenly heard.—After reposing some hours at Beaupreau, the Vendean army, more harrassed than discouraged, advanced upon Chollet, to try the chance of another engagement. On hearing of the enemy's approach, Léchelle caused the *generale* to be beat, and ranged his troops in order of battle. At noon the attack commenced; the first shock

of the right wing of the Vendéans was so violent, that they penetrated nearly to the suburbs, and although the republicans endeavoured several times to repulse the enemy, they could not drive them back to their first position ; several divisions in vain advanced with charged bayonets upon a body of troops commanded by Stofflet ; these attacks, which were sternly resisted, only served to renew the battle.

Whilst fortune smiled thus on the right wing of the Vendéans, the left had experienced the reverse. The Mayençais, who were opposed to this wing, had already broken it by three vigorous charges, when Beaupuy, falling with his cavalry on the scattered ranks of the enemy, overthrew them on all sides, and decided the victory, which till then had remained uncertain. The Vendean chiefs, however, did not forget themselves at this crisis, but flew amongst the fugitives, trying to reanimate their drooping courage, and calling to their cavalry to advance ; but the greater part had already retreated to Beaupreau. On receiving this intelligence, Laroche-Jaquelin, D'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the most celebrated of their chiefs, perceived that the time was come for them to fall with the ruins of their party ; collecting, therefore

fore, hastily a body of one hundred and fifty cavaliers, they rushed upon the conquerors : wherever this desperate troop presented itself, they left the traces of their passage ; several republican officers fell under their stroke, and the brave Beaupuy, borne by his courage into the middle of this formidable squadron, was on the point of being made prisoner, having had three horses killed under him. But at length the party became unequal to the conquest, the victorious army surrounded the Vendean chiefs, and directed their whole strength against them. Bonchamps and D'Elbée both killed by one fatal shot, had already met the fate they sought ; more than ten of the bravest officers had shared the same fate, and two-thirds of this chosen band were either wounded or dying. Laroche-Jaquelin, whose clothes were shattered by bullets, at length thought it time to retreat ; but even this now became every minute more dangerous to accomplish, when a body of Vendean infantry, hearing of the danger of its chiefs, boldly devoted itself to their safety, and returned to the fight. By prodigious efforts, they succeeded in disengaging them, and dragged D'Elbée, who yet breathed, and who lived some months after, from the hottest of the fight ; Laroche-Jaquelin, with a few men, had the good fortune

to

to gain Beaupreau. The right wing of the Vendéans, hearing of the disaster of the left, retreated, and with great difficulty succeeded in rejoining their general. Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, now the only support of his party, after allowing his army a few hours repose, gave orders to march to St. Florent, and set off immediately, accompanied by the greater part of his men. Two hours after his departure the republicans, favoured by the night, penetrated into Beaupreau, and put to death every person they met. I shall draw a veil over the horrors which took place in this town; suffice it to say, that they surpassed all those of which the Vendée had as yet been the witness and the victim.

Meanwhile the Vendean army reached St. Florent, and prepared to cross the Loire\*. On all sides  
crowds

\* The motives for this decision will be found sufficiently specious; they were certain of finding a number of discontented in Brittany and Anjou; they hoped, that supported by an army, these would not hesitate to come forward, and that they should also find in these provinces new resources wherewith to recommence the war; while on the other hand, the country they had quitted being nothing but a heap of ruins, it was not possible for so numerous an army to subsist.—Such were the reasons alledged to the soldiers, to induce them to this



crowds of men and women arrived who had escaped the fire and carnage, and who came trembling to rejoin their husbands or their fathers, and to share with them the horrors of their desperate situation.

It was at this time that the Committee of Public Safety passed a decree, by which they fixed the precise time when the war should finish. Men of sense could not forbear smiling to see men passing decrees against Fortune, and taking upon them to command victory. This folly reminds us of that of Xerxes, who ordered the sea to be whipped for having disobeyed his sovereign orders. We shall presently see how fortune mocked their  
commands,

this emigration; but the real motive, which decided the generals to take this measure, was, that in drawing the Vendéans from their country, they made them the dependants of fortune, and in forming them into a permanent body, left them only two resources, of conquering or dying with them. If on the one hand, this latter reason appeared decisively to favour the project, many greater considerations militated strongly against it on the other. Was it with a vanquished and fugitive army they could hope to gain fresh partisans? Could the Bretons, who, at the time Nantes was besieged, had not resolved to assist them, feel themselves less unwilling to share the fortunes of proscribed fugitives? in conducting the Vendéans also into a strange country, did they not expose themselves on the first defeat to want



commands, and revenged herself by reversing their decree\*.

On the 8th of October, Laroche-Jaquelin finally determined to try the famous passage, and the order for their departure was given. The Vendéans had previously confined in the prisons of St. Florent, several thousands of patriots whom they had taken in different engagements, and before their departure had resolved to shoot them. These unhappy wretches had already reached their last hour, when Lescures, then expiring, heard their plaintive cries. Rage and indignation gave him fresh vigor, and he caused himself to be carried to the Council, after having given orders to suspend the execution. In vain they answered him, that the right of reprisals would not allow them to be saved, that his pity was misplaced, that they were so many enemies left behind the army, and that perhaps

a rallying point? It follows, therefore, that they either hazarded all, or calculated on continual victories. If to this we add the egregious fault the chiefs committed in suffering the soldiers to take with them their wives and children, we shall be obliged to acknowledge that the passage of the Loire gave the death blow to the Vendée.

\* See Notes, Nos. XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII.

they

they would even interrupt the rear guard, at the moment of embarkation. "No barbarous reprisals," cried this generous captain, "Are they not men, are they not Frenchmen? No gentlemen, they shall not be slain in cold blood while I am here!" The dignified and commanding tone of Lescures, and the yet greater ascendancy of so renowned a chief, at length induced the Council to sign the pardon of these prisoners, and France owes to the humanity of a proscribed leader, the preservation of thousands of her defenders\*.

Meanwhile

\* I am far from justifying the insurrection of the Vendée and I believe, in the course of this work, I have made my profession of faith on that subject; but if I might be allowed to palliate the crime which Lescures committed in arming himself against the majority of his fellow-citizens, I should say that he was misled; and that in the general disorder caused by anarchy, he could not hear the voice of his country, stifled by the howlings of the different factions. However this may be, we can affirm, to his glory, that in the midst of the horrors of a civil war, he always preserved the heart of a Frenchman. All those whom the chance of war threw into the hands of the insurgents, regarded him as their tutelary saint, and the instant they beheld him, considered themselves in perfect safety. More than twenty thousand, who owe their lives to him, are to this day monuments of his unceasing humanity. The celebrated Mathurin de Lescures

Meanwhile the vessels were rowed across the Loire, and the army had just passed over, when the republican advanced guard appeared at St. Florent.

cures, so well known at Malta under the appellation of the brave Romégas, and who died in the year 1581, was one of the ancestors of the Vendean Lescures.

## CHAPTER VI.

## PASSAGE OF THE LOIRE.

THE Vendéans flying with their wives and children from their country, a prey to the flames, resembled the Trojans, who reunited themselves on Mount Ida, and whom Æneas some days after conducted across unknown seas to find a new Troy in Latium. The fate of the Vendéans, however, was still more deplorable ; for the Greeks satisfied, after the destruction of the empire of Priam, with the exemplary vengeance which they inflicted for the rape of Helen, never thought of following the unhappy remains of Ilion ; whilst the republicans, in order to extinguish every spark of the conflagration, were eager for the total extermination of these unhappy fugitives, who every where met an enemy, and who could not move a step except at the point of the sword.

It was impossible for any situation to be more desolate than that of the Vendéans, on leaving their boats : a fugitive army in a strange country, without provisions, burdened with a number of women and children, followed by a victorious army, and without any other prospect than certain death. Despair, it has been said, produces miracles, and the strength of mind displayed by the Vendéans under these circumstances is certainly wonderful. The whole of France was astonished to see men whom they imagined were destroyed, call forth new vigor and new means. It has been remarked, that in passing the Loire, they had become new men, and that they recovered their courage on losing sight of the place of their misfortunes. Their forces indeed appeared suddenly to increase in proportion to their distress; their new combats could only be compared to those of giants ; and if the genius of the republic had not guarded her with a watchful eye, and guided her brave defenders to the battle of Mans, she might have been in danger of being destroyed in her infancy. Not that the republican army had lost any of the brilliant courage by which it triumphed at Chollet, but what could be done against desperadoes, who, placed between the bayonet and the scaffold, knew no danger, precipitated themselves into the midst of the thickest battalions,

battalions, and fought for either victory or death ; but the recital of those bloody actions will confirm what I have here advanced.

The first town which submitted to the Vendéans upon their landing, was Varades\* ; Ancenis had resisted in vain ; its barriers and iron gratings were beaten down by the cannon, and it fell into the hands of the enemy.

Ingrande, Segré, and Candé also submitted to the same yoke : Chateau-Gontier attempted to try the chance of arms ; but after an engagement of some hours, the republicans too weak, were obliged to retreat, and leave the town to the conquerors. This example did not intimidate the inhabitants of Laval ; they assembled near their walls a sufficient number of the national guard, upon whom they founded their hopes : these new levies, however, could not long resist a formidable and disciplined army ; in less than an hour, the mass was dispersed, and the colours of the Vendée waved on the walls of Laval. It was in this town that Laroche-Jaquelin, previously appointed at

\* Varades had been taken by a Vendean detachment previous to the passage of the army.

Varades, generalissimo of the insurgents, made the enumeration of his army. He found that it amounted to thirty thousand foot, and one thousand two hundred cavalry, besides an immense number of women and children.

Meanwhile, the conquerors of Chollet, after having passed the Loire, pursued by forced marches the prey which had escaped them. Two days after the capture of Laval, the brave Mayençais, at the head of the advanced guard, appeared under its walls, and posted themselves near the bridge d'Entrasme, where the Vendean army flew to meet them. The Mayençais had to sustain the honour they had obtained at Chollet, and their adversaries to wipe off the disgrace : they accordingly fought with the greatest fury. The former, greatly inferior in point of number, had on their side skill and discipline ; while the Vendean army were superior in numbers, and fought desperately. After a battle of six hours, the victory still remained doubtful, till Stofflet, by a sudden attack, decided it in favour of the rebels. At the head of a body of fifteen hundred men, he made a circuit, and taking the enemy's columns suddenly in the rear, fired at the distance of forty paces, and then rushed on with charged bayonets. This brisk attack threw



threw the republican ranks into disorder; driven forcibly one against the other, the two parties were intermixed, and their musquets became useless; they seized each other by the hair of the head, fighting only with their bayonets, and the field of battle was covered with the slain. Notwithstanding the prodigious valour of the Mayençais, they were thrown into disorder, and could neither withstand the force of the two attacks, nor fight, rally, or make a good retreat. The enemy made a terrible slaughter of these brave men, the loss of whom their country must for ever deplore, and whose memory must for ever be held in veneration. Those who escaped retreated to Chateau-Gontier. Several Vendéans have assured me, that the Mayençais might have been assisted by a republican column, which was near Laval; but that from a base sentiment of jealousy, they rather determined to sacrifice men, who were regarded even by their enemies as the flower of the republican army. This assertion is, however, probably ill-founded, and appears entirely so, when all circumstances are considered.

The republicans, however, did not lose any of their courage, as the greater part of the conquerors of Chollet had not shared in the last battle.

General

General Léchelle who commanded them, was not long before he presented himself at Laval ; but even the small interval which had occurred since the last battle was sufficient to procure the Vendéans a considerable reinforcement, and more than ten thousand malcontents of the environs of Laval had joined the Vendean army. It is difficult to conceive how Laroche-Jaquelin could have gained a third victory without this reinforcement. Notwithstanding all the courage of the republicans, they were obliged to yield ; fortune had deserted the banners of the patriotic armies since the passage of the Loire. After a long and bloody battle, the republican ranks were thrown into confusion, and the rout was soon complete. At this battle, Lescures, observing the danger into which his army would be drawn by a defeat, rushed amongst the ranks, and so animated the Vendéans, that falling on the enemy with redoubled fury, the battle was soon decided. I have heard, that general Léchelle, not being able to rally the fugitives, lost his senses, but I am not certain of the truth of this assertion. The victors advanced next day to Chateau-Gontier, which town served as an asylum for the vanquished. They had an engagement in this place, in which general Beaupuy performed prodigies of valour. This brave general, at the head of a select corps, sustained

sustained for a long time the efforts of the enemy. Being at length wounded by a ball, which had pierced his lungs, he sent his shirt stained with blood to his grenadiers : animated at the sight, they made fresh efforts to wrest the victory from the Vendéans; but the rest of the army being in full retreat, they were finally obliged to abandon the field of battle.

The victories gained by the rebels after the passage of the Loire, had created more surprise than alarm in the republicans. A division of new troops and chasseurs of Paris, posted at Ernée, determined to wait for the conquerors, and Laroche-Jaquelin was equally resolved to make them repent their temerity. By a well-planned manœuvre, he divided his army into three columns, and so well concealed his movements from the enemy, that they had not the least idea of his approach. Two of these columns made a circuit in order to surround the patriots, whilst another column advanced towards them in front ; seeing the scanty numbers of the enemy, the republicans were astonished at their daring courage, and flew boldly to the attack. Laroche-Jaquelin, to draw them still farther into the snare, withdrew a few paces, and the republicans, perceiving

ceiving the enemy give way, redoubled their efforts; they thought themselves secure of victory; when the other two columns of the insurgents suddenly appeared, and took them in flank and rear. Astonished at this threefold attack, the republicans only thought of escaping, and in an instant their rout was complete. This last victory spread terror through all the departments of Brittany: Fougères was carried by assault, and Austrain, Dol, Pontorson, and Avranches threw open their gates to the conquerors. It is said, that at this crisis, Laroche-Jaquelin proposed in the council to march to Paris, and if they did not succeed in getting possession of it, to attack the army of the North in the rear, while the Austrians marched upon it in front. So bold a proposition astonished the other chiefs; some wished to take the road of Angers, and following up their advantages from the dispersion of the patriotic armies, return into the Vendée: others, deceived by the promises of the English, proposed to take Granville, that they might have a sea-port, where they could disembark. This plan, certainly the worst that the Vendéans could have followed, was, happily for the republic, that which the majority adopted. Granville was therefore attacked three days successively, but without success. Not being able to find in the whole

whole army a man who knew the state of the fortifications of this place, the insurgents attacked it on the strongest side, and after three days unsuccessful siege, were obliged to retreat. The garrison of this town by its gallant resistance covered itself with glory\*.

Ashamed of the first repulse which they had met with since their passage, the Vendéans returned to Vitri; a republican corps was the first to experience, that if the rebels understood nothing of

\* Of the passage across the Loire and the defence of Granville, we extract the following account from the third volume of Miss Williams's Letters.

“ It was at this period that the Committee of Public Safety, through the organ of Barrere, published the happy accomplishment of their prophetic decree, by declaring that the ‘ Vendee existed no longer.’ At Paris, as no one dared to doubt of the infallibility of the Committee, and still less to suspect its veracity, we imagined that the royalists had been completely crushed, because the Committee informed the Convention, ‘ that they existed no more.’ We learned, however, very soon what this annihilation of the Vendée meant. It was not altogether one of those agreeable figures of rhetoric with which Barrere was wont to harangue the Convention, since there was some truth in the declaration, which we did not discover at the first glance; for the great army of the roy-

of sieges, they knew perfectly well how to fight in the field. From Vitri the conquerors went to

alists had indeed evacuated the seat of war in the Vendée, if that could be called an evacuation which was a triumphal march across the Loire. This passage was accomplished without any loss, and the royalist army remained on the northern side, without molestation, for three days; after which they began their march towards the sea coast across the departments, which form the eastern parts of the provinces of Brittany. It might have been expected that their passage would have been opposed, or their march harassed; and that this did not happen, was another of Phillipeaux's mysteries; but the royalists were suffered to take uninterrupted possession of the country as far as Laval, having surrounded four thousand men who were sent in pursuit of them, and whom they cut in pieces; the *fansculotte* general, Oignier, who was ordered to march against the royalists, and protect the patriots, having thought it more prudent to keep always at ten leagues distance. From Laval they marched to Vitri, a place which was represented as a most advantageous and formidable pass, of which also they took possession, as the conventional Generalissimo had effected its evacuation, though he had every means of resistance, and might have stopped the march of the enemy; since the place was fortified, had a garrison of four thousand men, and was provisioned for more than a month. This place, which the inhabitants after the departure of the garrison would have defended, if they had not been forbidden, was taken, and the royalists, after defeating some other corps which were sent successively against them, marched on without further resistance to the coasts, through Avranches to Granville.

Granville



to Dol, where they were shortly afterwards attacked by three columns of the enemy. It seemed as if

Granville is a sea port on that part of the coast which fronts the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, stretching north and south, and forming a right angle with the coast that goes towards St. Maloes and Brest, of which the famous mountain of St. Michael is the point. It is the only port on that coast, and the possession of it would have given the royalists the advantage of immediate communication with the allies of the emigrants and the English, and the means of securing the most effective succour. As they had passed through a large tract of country with so little interruption, they did not expect much resistance, where the means of making it were so few, and therefore concluded they could repulse the garrison of Granville, which had marched out to meet them, and make themselves masters of that important place as easily as they had gained the rest. They took possession of the suburbs; but when they prepared to scale the walls, they found a resistance which they had little expected. The first hero that fell was the mayor, in the habit of his office, who had taken the command of the principal post. The royalist artillery made great ravages, and the houses in the suburbs afforded the assailants considerable shelter. The besieged set fire to these houses, and the attack became still more desperate: the royalists were often driven down the ramparts, and the rocks that overhung the town streamed with blood. This battle lasted near thirty hours, and I have been told by one of my acquaintance who fought on the republican side, that the spectacle was truly sublime. Not only every man, but every woman and child was that day a warrior—the artillery was served by the children, who, forming chains from



if the republicans had united all their forces, in order to crush the rebels at one blow. The attack commenced at three points, upon the high roads of Pontorson, Antrain, and at St. Malo.—To make head more effectually against the enemy, Laroche-Jaquelin divided his army into three bo-

the arsenal to the ramparts, conveyed the ammunition, while the women were employed in assisting their husbands, brothers, and fathers, and preventing the flames of the houses in the suburbs from communicating to those in the town.

The royalists were at length repulsed with great loss by this handful of republicans, and all the important advantages which they reasonably expected from this expedition, failed. They were forced to retreat back to the Loire, and in this retreat they might have been completely cut off; but the cowardly and debasing genius of *fansculotism* again prevailed; for Roffignol kept at seven leagues distance with his army at the moment of the perilous passage at Dol, and when the royalists had effected it, he brought up his troops who were completely routed and driven back to Rennes. The royalist army in their retreat laid siege to Angers, which was bravely defended by the garrison and the inhabitants in the absence of Roffignol. At Mans, the royalists were defeated with great loss by Westermann: having divided themselves into two columns, they attempted to pass the Loire at Chateau-briant and Ancenis; but their good fortune fled when the *fansculotte* general had ceased to command. At Ancenis they were again routed with great slaughter, and the passage of the Loire was effected with a very considerable loss.”—*Note of the Translator.*

dies.

dies. After several hours fighting, this general succeeded in defeating the division opposed to him; but whilst he was engaged in pursuing the enemy, he was informed that Stofflet, who commanded one of the three bodies of his army, had been briskly repulsed, and that, posted in a wood with two pieces of cannon, he was on the point of yielding to the republicans. He was also informed at the same time, that the commandant of the other division was taken prisoner, and that every thing on that side was in confusion. At this intelligence, he marched back, and fell vigorously upon Antrain to disengage his troops. Stofflet felt new ardor at his arrival, and the battle was renewed.

The exertions of both parties were now directed to this point; the battles of Chollet and Laval excepted, no engagement had yet been so bloody, as that which was now fought with unexampled fury. Their bayonets crossed more than once, and blood flowed in abundance. After fifteen hours fighting, victory at length declared itself for Laroche-Jaquin, in consequence of a vigorous and rapid charge which he made at the head of a body of reserve. The number of killed on both sides was very considerable, and this battle may  
certainly

certainly be considered as one of the longest and most sanguinary of the whole war\*.

So many bloody defeats would have depopulated any other country but France ; Persia and Assyria were formerly overturned by less shocks. When we reflect that, independently of this destructive civil war, France had to combat the greater part of the powers of Europe, we are at a loss to conceive how she could sustain such an unequal contest. It is surprising, also, that a state with a bad internal government, should have so well maintained itself externally. Never was French energy displayed to such advantage. Rome, with its boasted magnanimity, trembled on hearing of the defeat of Cannes ; the march of Spartacus, and the revolt of her allies were several times expected to overthrow this warlike republic ; but the power of Rome was precarious, her citizens scarcely making a fiftieth part of her allies and bondmen : the destruction of ten legions would have been to her an incurable wound ; in a word, neither her power, resources, nor energy can be compared with those which France displayed during the numerous storms of the revolution.

\* See Note, No. XIV.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, astonished at beholding the efforts of the republic, and perceiving that one bloody engagement was only the forerunner of another still more sanguinary; deceived also by those from whom he expected assistance, weakened by his losses, and in fine, losing all hope of an insurrection in mass of the Eastern provinces, resolved on returning to the Vendée. This project might have been executed a month before, but at this period a return was impossible. The enemy had employed all this time in fortifying the places and bridges by which the Vendéans might have effected their passage.

In order to make their way, they were now necessitated to besiege several places, which, as I have already observed, they were not capable of undertaking. Notwithstanding all these obstacles, the army, however, began its march, and arrived at Ernée; it was in this town they deposited the remains of the brave Lescures. This general, wounded at Chollet, died a short time after the battle of Laval: his body had ever since been carried about in the rear of the army; but at length, foreseeing the dangers which threatened them, Laroche-Jaquelin ordered it to be buried with military honours at Ernée. A few days after  
this

this event, the Vendéans reached the gates of Angiers ; the garrison was commanded by the gallant Beaupuy, who, though wounded, ordered himself to be carried upon the ramparts. This general repulsed with vigor all the attacks of the enemy, and by his spirited resistance gave time to the republicans to come to his assistance. Learning the arrival of a new republican army, the Vendéans raised the siege, and resolved on returning to Brittany to recruit, but, attacked in their retreat by several columns, they did not reach Baugé until after five days of continual fighting.

On the day following the town of La Flèche endeavouring to oppose their passage, was taken by storm\*, and the rebels marched upon Mans, which

\* Since the period of their passage of the Loire, the Vendéans had never found themselves in so critical a situation. The town of La Flèche, defended by forty thousand men, and by the river of the Loire, the bridges of which had been destroyed, presented to the assailants an insurmountable barrier ; on the other side, the advanced guard of the republican army was fighting with the rear-guard of the Vendéans. Thus hemmed in between a river and an army, the insurgents had no means whatever of escape, when Laroche-Jaquelin, at the head of a detachment of fifteen hundred men, discovered a ford at about two leagues up the river, which he passed, and falling

which they also took after a very warm resistance. Some days afterwards, Laroche-Jaquelin hearing that Westermann, who had been sent back to the Vendée, was approaching at the head of a numerous army to drive him from Mans, was guilty of a fault, which brought about the ruin of his party. Instead of marching off his soldiers from Mans, where plenty and good living enervated their courage, and leading them to meet the enemy, he resolved to remain in that post, which he thought advantageous. Westermann soon presented himself before this town: Laroche-Jaquelin beat to arms, but the greater part of the Vendéans, in a state of intoxication, remained insensible to the danger. The cowards, who in the open field would have been obliged to fight, remained secreted in Mans, waiting the issue of the engagement. Although weakened by this defection, Laroche-Jaquelin for some time sustained the shock of the enemy. A battery which he had placed

falling upon the garrison, put it to flight, hastily repaired the bridge, crossed over his army, posted his artillery on the bridge, and in this strong position, obliged the republican army to retreat. This affair did the greatest honour to Laroche-Jaquelin; to him the Vendean army owed its preservation, and their acclamations after the victory were a sufficient testimony that they considered their general as the life and soul of their cause.

near the town, and which he had masked, made such dreadful havoc at the beginning of the engagement among the republican ranks, that they were thrown into disorder, and would have been routed, if Westermann, assisted by some of the republican generals\*, had not renewed the combat. The battle had lasted for five hours with equal success, and the victory remained as yet undecided, when Laroche-Jaquelin, twice dismounted, having had two horses killed under him, entered Mans to give orders. This retreat dispirited the Vendéans, who fell back and entered the town with him.

The general returned in vain to the field of battle ; in the midst of the tumult and clamour of the women, his voice was not heard, nor his orders obeyed ; thinking therefore the battle lost, he assembled his cavalry and retreated to Laval. Meanwhile, the Vendéans who had been scattered about the street, hearing the noise of the cannon,

\* The patriotic generals were so often suspended or broke by an unsettled and jealous government, that it is not easy in this work to notice in a concise manner the different chiefs who have commanded the republican armies, during the three campaigns of 1792, 1793, and 1794; I know, however, that in the battle of Mans, the brave Marceau acted as general in chief.

assembled,



assembled, and advanced against the enemy. The engagement began once more in the streets of Mans, and became more sanguinary than ever : enraged at seeing the victory so long disputed, the republicans rushed with fury into the enemy's ranks, but were repeatedly driven back by the fire of the musquetry ; a piece of artillery, charged with case-shot, did the greatest execution. This piece which commanded one of the principal streets of Mans, and which was fired upon the patriots at the distance of sixty paces, swept away whole ranks. This horrible carnage lasted till evening, the streets of the town streaming with blood : the Vendéans still seemed resolved to bury themselves under its ruins ; but the republicans at length gained possession of the principal posts of the town, and the insurgents not seeing their General fighting at their head, were under the necessity of retreating, which they did in platoons, taking the road of Laval. Laroche-Jaquelin was some leagues from Mans, when he judged, by the sound of the artillery, that his troops were still engaged. Ashamed of too early a retreat, he turned his horse, and hastened at full gallop to rejoin his army ; but all that he could do, was to protect the retreat of the fugitives with his

cavalry. I have been assured, that in this retreat, seeing his cause desperate, he several times rashly rushed upon the enemy, anxious as it were for death, but was at length compelled by some of his officers to retreat to Laval. This general, whose courage was so universally acknowledged, and who had given so many proofs of presence of mind and military knowledge, committed two very capital errors this day : first, in having waited for the enemy at Mans, instead of withdrawing his forces from that town, and secondly, in having too soon despaired of success\*.

The Vendéans had no sooner quitted Mans, than a carnage still more horrible took place in this unfortunate city. I shall draw a veil over all the horrors committed in this place, and simply state, that more than eighteen thousand Vendéans, old men, women, and infants, as

\* Several Vendéans have assured me, that Laroche-Jaquelin left Mans only to rally the fugitives and renew the combat ; this opinion has the air of probability : according to vulgar opinion, however, success is always the fruit of talent, as the reverse is that of inexperience ; a general, therefore, let him be ever so brave and skilful, is always in fault when he is beaten.

well

well as soldiers, were slaughtered. In other respects, the republican generals displayed on this day the greatest courage and abilities\*.

The Vendéans had now received a wound from which they could never hope to recover. This defeat had deprived them of the bravest of their soldiers, of their artillery, ammunition, and even of hope, the last resource of the wretched.

The chiefs assembled at Laval, and unanimously agreed, that the only plan which the army could follow, was to approach the Loire, and attempt the passage, cost what it would. They accordingly marched towards Ancenis, continually harrassed by the republicans. On reaching this town, Laroche-Jaquelin ordered rafts, which being badly constructed, appeared so unsafe, that the army refused to embark. To encourage them by his example, Laroche-Jaquelin, followed by several officers, sprung upon the first, and after struggling about half an hour against the waves, effected a landing on the opposite side ; several hundreds of his soldiers imitated his example, and were as successful as their general. It is thought that the majority of the

\* See Note, No. XX.

army would have passed successfully, had not the republicans suddenly come up, and driven the insurgents to Savenay. On the next day, this army, deprived of its general, and entirely dispirited, scarcely made a shadow of resistance ; attacked by the conquerors, it received its death blow in the fields of Savenay.

Such was the result of the famous passage of the Loire, which cost France so much blood, that no Frenchman can still help shuddering at the name of the civil war in the Vendée.

## CHAPTER VII.

## CAMPAIGN OF 1794

AFTER the defeat at Savenay, the civil war appeared finished, and strictly speaking, no longer existed in the Vendée. The remains of an army which had so often carried terror even to the capital, now scattered about in the forests, or sequestered in some of the communes of Brittany, thought of nothing but of the means of prolonging their existence, and returning back to their homes. Like the Israelites, who during their captivity at Babylon, upon the banks of the Euphrates, wept at the remembrance of Jerusalem, the Vendéans, their eyes continually fixed upon that insurmountable barrier which divided them from all they held dear, were contriving

triving night and day the means of overcoming this obstacle, in order once more to visit their native country.

Meanwhile Laroche-Jauelin, cut off from his army by this unexpected event, and pursued by a numerous detachment of republicans, was obliged to separate from the few soldiers who had followed him, and, accompanied by only one officer, withdrew into the woods, to escape the active search of the enemy. Overcome with hunger and fatigue, he set off before night with his companion; at the hazard of being discovered, they stopped at the first house chance threw in their way, where they found a charitable farmer, who after giving them supper, conducted them to a barn to pass the night. They were scarcely asleep, when the farmer, terrified, came to awake them. "Gentlemen," said he, "fly instantly; my house is filled with republicans; you also run the more risk, as they even propose to sleep in this very barn, and will be here immediately." "My friend," replied Laroche-Jauelin, "though we should perish yet we must sleep; leave us and the care of our preservation to Providence." The farmer was scarcely gone out, when the republicans entered, and, climbing up on the hay,

hay, fell asleep by the side of the two Vendéans. Being all extremely fatigued, they slept during the night, and at day break, Laroche-Jaquelin awoke his comrade, and each taking a musket, hastened away from so perilous an abode. After two days march, they withdrew into a wood, having no other subsistence than what they took from such as were within reach of their muskets; but wearied at length by so miserable a way of life, they bent their steps towards Chatillon. Laroche-Jaquelin from thence sent several emissaries into all the neighbouring parishes to raise new forces, but the remembrance of the defeats at Mans and Savenay was yet too strong in the minds of the Vendéans, to lead them to face new dangers. The commands of the general were no longer regarded, and all that he could do, was to assemble a few of the old soldiers who had escaped from the last engagements.

I have no doubt, but that if the Government at this period had confided the command of the republican forces to such a skilful, prudent, and above all moderate general, as Hoche, who reached this country too late, the civil war would have been completely quelled. Had an amnesty been granted at this moment, it would have won their

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hearts



hearts to the republic, closed up their wounds, and in a word, have prevented the danger and expence of a new civil war; but the Committee of Public Safety, intoxicated with power, and maddened into rage, thinking that blood only could quench the flame, sent into the Vendée, in quality of commissary, one of those monsters which nature sometimes produces as the scourge of mankind, one of those blood-thirsty tigers, resembling human kind only in its form. The barbarous Carrier, reaching Nantes surrounded by executioners, himself more inhuman than any of them, inundated the town, and stained the Loire with a deluge of blood; and on the other side, the republican generals, instead of applying healing balms to their dreadful wounds, made use only of the most violent caustics, fire and sword. It might well have been said, that the Vendéans in their eyes were no part of the human race; women with child, the superannuated and diseased, the infant in the cradle; nay, even the beasts\*, houses, stones, and also the soil, appeared to

\* It is calculated that eleven hundred thousand oxen have perished either by the fire or the sword, in this fertile country, from whence Paris and the other great communes of the

to them so many enemies deserving extermination ; and I have no doubt, but that, if they had had the power, they would have hurled the thunder-bolt on this unfortunate country, to reduce it once more to Chaos. If the reader conceives this statement exaggerated, let him have the courage to read the different *proces verbaux* inserted at the end of the memorial of Lequinio, printed at Paris the first of Brumaire, third year ; let him cast his eyes on the pieces annexed to the trial of Carrier, and also to the depositions and denunciations addressed at the time to the Com-

the interior heretofore were supplied with the greater part of their provisions". *Lequinio, Ouvrage sur la Vendée*, p. 164.

It is a fact, that the greatest part of the incendiaries diverted themselves with listening to the moans of the bullocks in their stalls, which were on fire, not suffering them to be untied ; they have been also seen, when they had nothing to fear from the enemy, take delight in plunging their bayonets into the sides of the oxen fastened to the waggons which contained their food. What shall I say to the burning of corn and fodder, of the rapes, massacres, &c.

Non mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,  
 Ferrea vox omnes scelerum comprehendere formas  
 Possim—— ——— ——— ———

*Note of the Author.*

See Miss Williams's letters, from page 51 to 54. Vol. III.

*Note of the Translator.*

mittee of Public Safety, and reprinted in the different journals.

At the recital of so many atrocities, the Vendean party revived; Laroche-Jaquelin found a new army, at the head of which he took Chollet, beat several republican divisions, and each day made further progress. In vain had the victory of Savenay been followed by the capture of the isle of Noirmoutiers, and the generallissimo D'Elbée, mortally wounded at Chollet, been shot in his chair; these continued successes could not daunt men, who had no alternative but to fight or die. Charrette, though beaten at Bouin, and driven from this isle, had assembled an army, with which he penetrated as far as Maulevrier, where his presence gave new courage to the party of Laroche-Jaquelin.

These tidings roused such of the Vendéans as had escaped the carnage of Savenay. By dint of money, they bribed watermen to transport them across the Loire in the night. Although the republicans hunted them as wild beasts, the forest of Printiau sheltered them during the day, and at night they rejoined Charrette, who, posted on the banks with eight thousand men, recruited  
his

his army with these new soldiers. Several chiefs, and among the rest, Bernard de Marigny, at length joined Laroche-Jaquelin. It was about this time, that the two columns, named the *infernal*, received orders to march through the Vendée, and to destroy every thing they met in their passage with fire and sword: and never were savage orders executed with more barbarity. I shall not dwell upon all the horrors they committed, but merely refer the reader, if he has courage enough to examine this hideous picture, to the memorial of the representative Lequinio, which I have already noticed; all that I shall state is, that the atrocities, previously committed, were merely child's play, compared with these new horrors; these infernal columns massacred about the fourth of the remaining population of the country; by the burning of corn, houses, cattle, and other ravages of all kinds, they cost the Vendée upwards of twenty-five millions; an enormous loss, which thirty years of peace and prosperity can scarcely repay: and in short, by increasing the Vendean army in a tenfold proportion, and thereby prolonging the war, they caused to France an expence of more than fifty thousand men. I know that the chiefs, who were commissioned to execute these barbarous measures,

measures, have pretended that they acted only in consequence of superior orders ; if this be true, as I am ready to admit, it is but just to throw the blame of these cruelties upon the real authors. Whatever may be the real state of the case, on the approach of these exterminating columns, every person flew to the woods ; those who till then had disapproved the war, and had not at all interfered, were the first to arm, and advance against the common enemy.

The patriots who came back to the Vendée, finding their property destroyed, no longer knew what power to implore ; the greater part, escaping by night, reached the frontier towns, and spread universal alarm. The magistrates of these towns, filled with indignation, called on the government for vengeance ; in a word, the disorder became general. Taking advantage of this confusion, Charrette advanced upon Lianché, and surprised one of these armies. The soldiers loaded with spoils\*, chose to fly rather than fight : more  
than

\* When their knapsacks were full, they lost all relish for fighting, fearing they should lose them, and the soldiers were continually asking for hospital tickets. The chiefs acted still worse : they put into requisition the carts belonging to the communes,

than three hundred thousand livres and five hundred fusils fell into the hands of the insurgents, who drove the republicans back to Puy-Belliard, leaving Charrette master of the country, at the head of more than fifteen thousand men. This infernal expedition, therefore, which had been held forth as the means of finishing the civil war, was precisely the cause of its revival; all the cruelties, conflagrations, and horrors were of no other avail than to inflame the passions to the highest pitch; producing no other effect than that of ruining the country, of heightening still further the joy of our enemies, and giving to this war, thus hideous in all its features, the exact similitude of a war of cannibals.

The reader, no doubt, will be curious to know what measures Charrette took, after the passage of the Loire, to maintain himself in the Vendée. So

communes, carried off all the best articles from the houses of the patriots, and then permitted these unfortunate persons to move the rest, that they might have the brutal pleasure of burning their houses. After this conflagration, the patriots were no sooner brought into the middle of the column, than the volunteers, following the example of their generals, seized the rest, killed the men, violated their wives and daughters, and afterwards bayoneted them".——*Lequinio*, pages 136, 137.

long

long as Laroche-Jaquelin had kept in action the greater part of the republican troops on the other side of the river, it is not astonishing that he should have been able to withstand the divisions sent against him ; but after the capture of Noirmoutiers, when the generals might have turned their whole force against him, it was certainly wonderful to see him struggle with advantage against such numerous and terrible enemies. It was also under these circumstances that he displayed the greatest abilities ; for when he saw the storm ready to burst over him, instead of following the example of the Upper Vendée, that of collecting all his forces, and hazarding a decisive engagement, he fought only to harass his enemies, to intercept their provisions, to surprise their detached parties, and to fall upon their rear-guard when he found it entangled in narrow passes and difficult roads.

If he found himself closely pressed by a superior army, whilst the enemy were ranging themselves in order of battle, Charrette gave the order *Sauve qui peut* ; in an instant every man disappeared : followed by thirty horsemen, he fled with the greatest expedition to such town as he had fixed upon for the rallying point, which was sometimes more than eight leagues from the field of battle,  
and



and while the republicans, eager for the spoils, spread themselves in platoons about the neighbouring villages, Charrette fell on the different corps, and killed great numbers, till threatened by the approach of the enemy, he gave fresh orders, and disappeared with his troops. He reaped great advantages from this mode of carrying on the war; for the patriots, unable to subsist in a ruined country, immediately on their convoys being interrupted, were obliged to abandon the interior of the Vendée, and retire to their respective positions. It was by such means, that Charrette so long maintained himself in his country, and rendered himself as formidable to his enemies after a defeat, as Laroche-Jaquelin and Lescures after their victories. It must be admitted, however, that in spite of all the dexterity of this subtle chieftain, he would have been crushed in the course of the campaign by the republican armies, if, at this crisis, a new conflagration, no less terrible than that of the Vendée, had not burst forth on the other side of the Loire. The war of the Chouans made a powerful diversion in favour of Charrette. Half the republican forces were obliged to cross this river, in order to oppose the progress of this new Vendée, which was so much the more terrible as its extent was greater, and as it approached so much nearer the capital.

The chiefs of these new enemies made their attacks only in the night. Their scanty resources did not allow them to engage in such decisive battles as in the Vendée had so often balanced the destinies of France. Although this insurrection was not so formidable as the former, it caused no less alarm to the government. It was providential that this war did not burst forth till after the victories of Laval, as the enemy, aided by such a powerful party, might have committed the fate of the republic, and the consequences of such a reunion would have been incalculable. But, I shall not pretend to give a precise history of this disastrous war; the task I have undertaken is already too irksome, and I should find little pleasure in entering on a career in which every step would be obstructed with carcases, and the eye dwell only on assassinations\*. I shall content myself with making  
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\* Several friends to whom I had shown my manuscript, were anxious that I should dwell more at length upon the cruelties which were committed in the Vendée; they thought the public would read with avidity the anecdotes of the massacre of Machecoul, the *noyades* of Carrier, the assassinations, rapes, and conflagrations of the infernal columns; but the work of Lequinio contains enough to satisfy readers who are fond of such details; my pen has several times refused to trace these horrors. Besides, I think it useless to affright foreigners

one observation. Many persons have attributed the name of *Chouans*, which was bestowed on these new insurgents, to three brothers named Chouins : several Vendéans have assured me, that there really did exist three brothers of that name. However that may be, it was not from them that the rebels, on the other side of the Loire, gained the name of Chouans. Under the old government of France, the salt-smugglers had taken for their watch note the hooting of the owl, which they made use of either to escape the officers, known by the name of *gabelleurs*, or as a signal for resistance, when they thought themselves sufficiently in force. Among the first insurgents of this country were a great number of these smugglers, who assembled by means of this signal. Their cries, heard a great distance off in the country, spread terror amongst the citizens attached to the republic ; not thinking themselves able to resist these nocturnal enemies they took to flight, and every where spread the

foreigners with the recital of our crimes ; they are already too well convinced that the war in the Vendée was a war of cannibals : without doubt, it would have been more to the honour of France to have buried these transactions in the most profound oblivion, and hid in the bowels of the earth the bones of the unfortunate of every age and sex, with which the Vendean fields are as it were whitened.

alarm, crying, *Take care of the Chouettes*, and by corruption, *Take care of the Chouans*. This is the real original of a name substituted by the Jacobins at that time for the nicknames of *aristocrate*, *feuillant*, *federaliste*, and *modéré*, which they had bestowed on all those who did not coincide with their opinions. This digression upon the Chouans however has drawn me wide from my subject, to which I return.

Whilst Charrette successfully maintained himself in this country, Laroche-Jaquelin on his side made every day new progress; sometimes victorious, and at others defeated; one day he took a town, and the next day was obliged to evacuate it; continually on the march, he threatened the different cantonments about him; keeping his soldiers in constant exercise, and every day finding his party increased by the wrecks of Chollet and Savenay. The republicans, on their side, redoubled their efforts to crush in the bud this fresh insurrection. If they advanced in mass, they found no enemies, if they went back to their different cantonments, they were every day obliged to repel attacks, and sometimes even to undergo partial defeats. Laroche Jaquelin did not leave them a minutes rest, and by numberless

less different incursions, postponed for some time the end of this disastrous war : but at length, for the tranquillity of the republic, and the ruin of his party, the time arrived which fortune had fixed for the termination of his active life.

Laroche-Jaquelin since his return from the departments on the other side of the Loire, had paid very little attention to his personal safety. In the preceding combats he had fought as a leader, and several times as a private, but since his return he affected the most extravagant rashness. It is said, that foreseeing the triumph of the republic, he waited after the example of Lescures, Bonchamps, and D'Elbée, his friends and coadjutors, to bury himself under the ruins of the Vendée. In a skirmish near Vezino, where the republicans had been put to the rout, he joined with ardor in pursuit of the fugitives. Among these was a soldier who not being able to escape from the cavalry, had hid himself behind a bush. Laroche-Jaquelin disregarding the representations of those about him, advanced to seize him : the volunteer sure of death, hearing the name of the general, wished in dying to render a last service to his country ; he aimed at the imprudent Laroche-Jaquelin, who instead  
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of falling back, advanced with unexampled temerity, and at the instant he stretched out his hand to seize him, the soldier shot him through the head.

Thus perished by the hand of a person unknown, this celebrated chief, who had risen superior to so many defeats and reverses. After having escaped from the battles of Chollet and Mans, he fell in a skirmish never to rise again, and in his fall he drew on that of his whole party. Stofflet appointed generalissimo of the army, ordered his death to be kept secret ; but in spite of all his efforts the report of this irreparable loss spread throughout the Vendée, and his fate occasioned so great a consternation, that had the republican generals known how to take advantage of this event, they would doubtless have pacified the Upper Vendée. But there was neither sufficient unanimity or harmony among them to accomplish so desirable an end : too many were privately interested against the termination of this intestine war : some wished to retain their lucrative employments, others hoped yet to reap advantage from the smoking ruins of the Vendée, and the government, ill advised, generally adopted the worst measures. Instead, therefore, of profiting  
by



by the consternation of the insurgents, the republicans evacuated the interior of the country, and contented themselves with establishing camps at Chollet, Thouars, and Chiché. By this plan a few soldiers were to be kept in active service ; but they did not reflect, that in leaving the rebels masters of the districts of Bressuire and Chattillon, they allowed them time to recover from their alarm, and take measures of defence, and that by this means, the civil war would be necessarily prolonged.

The different patriotic camps frequently made incursions into the insurgent country, but this was of little use, since all the advantages which they reaped from these partial enterprises scarcely counterbalanced the reverses which they afterwards underwent.

A few individual massacres, and now and then the burning of a few houses, was the only result of so ill combined a system ; which would have ended eventually in greater disorders, had not the government at length by its wisdom and moderation put an end to a war which had been rendered atrocious by the commission of so many cruelties.

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The evacuation of the Vendée had procured so many advantages to Stofflet, that in less than ten months, his forces amounted to upwards of ten thousand men. At the head of this army he attacked several times the post of Chateignerie; but repulsed by the bravery of the republican troops, he was constantly obliged to fall back on his cantonments. It was at the issue of one of these engagements, that, contradicted by Bernard de Marigny, one of the bravest officers of the Vendée, he inhumanly ordered him to be shot by a body of chasseurs who were under his orders. This barbarous act alienated every one from him, and disposed the chiefs, friends of the unfortunate Bernard, to listen to the propositions of peace which were made them, and rid themselves of this despotic game-keeper.

Charrette, on his part, although extremely weakened, still maintained himself with considerable advantage; part of the republican forces were then employed in reducing the inhabitants of the marshes, and although these rebels were often routed they were never entirely subdued. It is certain that their arms were less formidable to the patriots, than the unwholesomeness of the water and the air of these infectious marshes which had destroyed

destroyed more than one half ; in a word, if the Vendéans lost ground every day, the republicans on their part exhibited in their movements signs of languor, the sure forerunners of the termination of civil wars.

I leave it to whoever may write the history of the Vendée, to describe the events of the rest of the campaign, which presents nothing but a horrid picture of mutual cruelties, and frequent actions, but no way decisive.

I pass on immediately to the event which delivered France from a yoke as ignominious as it was insupportable, to the ninth of Thermidor, which by destroying the anarchists, crushed enemies not less to be dreaded than the Vendéans.

That glorious day, by overthrowing Robespierre and his numerous hordes, saved the whole of France from a fate that seemed inevitable ; the great changes which it produced in every branch of administration soon influenced the system which had been till then pursued in the course of the civil war. Freed at length from the shameful yoke which had so long oppressed it, the Convention perceived that the continuance of that intestine

war only tended to undermine the vital strength of the body politic and every day accelerate its ruin. Too powerful to think itself humbled by making the first advances, the Convention did not disdain to hold out its hand to the insurgents in token of reconciliation. Peaceably inclined persons were sent in its name to recal the Vendéans to a sense of their duty and the obligations of nature : all violent measures were laid aside, and these beneficent commissioners made use of nothing but the language of reason and humanity. A suspension of arms was the first effect of this wise system ; very soon after, a treaty, or rather a general amnesty, signed at the camp of la Jaunaie, agreed upon and accepted with mutual good faith, applied a healing balm to wounds almost mortal, and which will yet long continue to bleed. On this happy event, the Vendean peasantry, laying aside their arms, ran to furbish up their plough shares, and resume the labours of the field ; in a very short space of time that desolated country, covered with fresh crops, presented more consoling prospects. The honest Vendéans at the sight of their rising harvests began to feel detestation against the instigators of this atrocious war, the fruits of which were the demolishing and burning their houses, massacring their families, and the loss of more than four hundred thousand Frenchmen.

Frenchmen\*. Whatever may have been falsely asserted at the time, it is certain that since they laid down their arms, these peaceable husbandmen have not ceased to give to the mother country the strongest pledges of their sincerity and good faith. On being solicited some months after the treaty to resume their arms, they constantly disclaimed the enterprises of a few restless disturbers, and remained unmoved witnesses of their defeat and their punishment. Such was the happy result of the wisdom of the pacificators, to whom France is indebted for its most valuable gift, that of perfect union among its citizens. If since the treaty of la Jaunaie, some embryo sparks have given occasion to dread a fresh eruption†, I do not hesitate to affirm that the Vendean peasantry had no share whatever in these fresh insurrectional movements. The new insurgents were solely composed of old chiefs, who finding neither safety nor pro-

\* See Note, No. XXI.

† Had it not been for the victory which General Andouin gained at Auxbiers on the 13th Brumaire of the year 8, it was much to be feared that civil war would have been re-kindled. The insurgents already mustered six thousand men, among whom there was hardly any Vendean peasants; nevertheless, the day of the 18th Brumaire contributed more to the extinction of this new flame, than the victory of Aubiers.

tection in their houses, were compelled to seek it in arms ; of conscripts who had taken refuge in the neighbouring departments, and also of such as had no visible means of subsistence or livelihood. The persecution, as unjust as it was impolitic, which the Directory raised against the catholic worship, may indeed have drawn a few of the Vendean peasantry into the party of the new insurgents ; but the revolution of the 18th Brumaire, by placing a man admired by all parties at the head of the government, dissipated in an instant, like a thin vapour, all those appearances of insurrection, and since that happy moment the most perfect tranquillity has reigned in that country : the Government is every day reaping the fruit of its moderation ; the ministers of the catholic religion, recalled to their duties, constantly preach nothing but submission to the laws, silencing, by such wise conduct, the calumnies which have been raised against them.

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE INTERIOR GOVERNMENT OF THE VENDEE  
DURING THE WAR. ANECDOTES OF THE MOST  
CELEBRATED GENERALS ON EACH SIDE.

BEFORE I conclude this historical Sketch, I cannot avoid taking a short view of the interior government of the Vendée during the war.

The reader may perhaps imagine that the greatest confusion pervaded that country at the time ; nevertheless, excepting those evils inseparable from civil war, it may be averred that order was preserved even in the midst of disorder itself.

A superior council established by the chiefs at Chatillon, and directed by the former Bishop of Agra, was the centre of the whole civil government of the Upper Vendée : with respect  
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to the lower part\*, I am not possessed of sufficient information to enter into these particulars; but I presume from what has been related to me, that it was very nearly formed upon the same principles, except that it gave to the military a more absolute power.

The superior council of Chatillon connected the administrative and judicial organization; it had under its orders, in each commune, a sub-committee, entrusted with the details and transmission of various orders. These committees distributed to the soldiers who were marching to the army, provisions, wine, and ammunition; besides this, they took every week an account of

Although the bishop of Agra presided over the superior council, it is no less certain that he was only considered by the greatest part of the Vendean chiefs as a proper instrument to rouse the spirit of the people. A celebrated ecclesiastic, whom I dare not name, but whom I point out plainly enough to the reader, by saying, that the government and the capital set the greatest value on his virtues and talents, was, properly speaking, the soul of the civil government of the Vendée; he was strongly seconded by Michael Desefarts, a magistrate as much esteemed for his probity as for the extent of his knowledge.—*Note of the Editor.*

The ecclesiastic alluded to is the celebrated Abbé Bernier, who took part in the last pacification, and is since rewarded with a bishopric.—*Note of the Translator.*



all capable of bearing arms, named the captains of the different companies, decided on the number of foldiers who were to be in active service, and directed their route. In general each parish was composed of two companies; as soon as the orders arrived, one of these companies set out upon the projected expedition; upon its return home, it was replaced by the other on the first fresh order, so that each marched only in its turn. It happened, however, sometimes that both were obliged to be on service: this was principally when the generals dreaded an invasion of the territory, or when they wished to strike some decisive blow. At the beginning of the war exact discipline prevailed in the army\*. Every foldier detected in pillage, or who demanded more of his landlord than

\* The following is the comparison which Citizen Lequinio makes in his work between the generals of the two parties. If I often quote this author, it is because I am persuaded his testimony cannot be suspected.

“ Perfidious generals authorised to carry into execution the counter-revolutionary plan of the tyrant (Robespierre) to whose schemes this intestine war was necessary, proclaimed amnesties which they did not observe: pillage, rape, and cruel treatment of all kinds were tolerated by these wretches, and even taught by their own example. While these disorders took place, the chiefs of the rebellion had the crafty policy to conceal

than lodging and board, was flogged; but these punishments were always very rare, and only in the beginning of the insurrection; towards the conclusion of the war, the Vendean shewed as much ardour for pillage as the enemy\*. The police of the communes was intrusted to committees; but their decisions were submitted to the final decision of the superior council. With respect to military affairs, they were decided in a council of war, composed of thirty officers; all the expeditions and projects of attack were decided on by a majority of votes; nevertheless, the council generally paid great deference to the

ceal their barbarous and sanguinary dispositions, in order to gain adherents; they had even the hypocrisy to make a shew of moderation, of respect for order, of generosity, &c." *Lequinio*, page 185. I leave the well-informed and especially the impartial reader, to make his own commentary upon this passage.

\* At the beginning of the war, the Vendean conqueror was seen prostrating himself in the churches, and returning thanks to the God of armies; throughout the whole camp a single blasphemy was not heard: prayer and other different exercises of piety always preceded battles. But this good conduct did not last long: by degrees, the love of plunder and the thirst of revenge gained ground in the hearts of the Vendean, and towards the end of the war they mustered in their army a considerable number of plunderers, who yielded neither in want of discipline nor ferocity to their opponents,  
advice

advice of Lescures and Laroche-Jaquelin. I shall not enter into further particulars upon this part of the subject ; what I have just stated is sufficient for this outline, and answers the purpose I originally intended\*.

I shall finish this chapter with some account of the generals of the two parties, who distinguished themselves in this war. I shall not speak of those who are still alive, fearful of offending the delicacy of such as I might think it right to notice with approbation and applause, and of irritating those whom I might have reason to blame ; each may however be assured, that posterity will one day do justice to the talents and humanity of the former, as well as condemn the latter for their incapacity and acts of violence.

\* The reader will perhaps learn with pleasure, that some days before the burning of Chatillon the Vendean chiefs had re-organized their civil and military government ; D'Elbée retained the title of generalissimo, but his authority was counter-balanced by that of Lescures' father-in-law, the celebrated Donnissant, formerly a field marshal, and who had been appointed governor of the Vendée. That general, after having distinguished himself by his talents in almost every battle which was fought during the campaign of 1793, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of his enemies at the battle of Savenay ; carried to Angers, he perished by the guillotine a few days after.

On the list of republican generals who have distinguished themselves in this war, Kleber, Westermann, and Hoche, are the most remarkable. These three men, of obscure origin, owed their advancement more to their valour and their merit than to the circumstances which produced the revolution. Kleber, who had risen from a common soldier to the rank of general, appeared for the first time in the Vendée at the head of that brave army of Mentz, to which France was indebted for so many victories and the reduction of the insurgents. His first battles were so many triumphs, and if that of Torfou in some degree checked his rapid progress, it did not tarnish his laurels. The able retreat which Kleber made, pursued by more than forty thousand Vendéans resolutely bent upon his ruin, through roads almost impracticable, for more than five leagues, far from fullying his fame, would have been sufficient to establish the reputation of any other general. The services which he rendered to the republic after the passage of the Loire, are of such a nature as never to be forgotten. The victory of Savenay stamped for ever the fame of that brave commander. Summoned to the banks of the Rhine, he there made a new display of his talents ; having lastly accompanied the greatest general of the age to Egypt, to gather fresh laurels,

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he was arrested in the career of triumph by the hand of an assassin, and left on the shores of the Nile a name respected as much by the vanquished, as it was dear to the conquerors.

I have in another place given an account of Westermann ; that intrepid general, little versed perhaps in the military art, but excelling in *coups-de-mains*, did singly more mischiefs to the insurgents than a whole army. The diversion that he made at the time of the siege of Nantes, by delivering that city, encouraged the disheartened republicans, and shewed them how the Vendée might be subdued. If he was afterwards defeated before Chatillon it was because prudence seldom accompanies too daring a courage, and because thinking too contemptibly of the enemy before him, he flattered himself that with his small army, he was in a situation to counterbalance the whole force of his enemies.

That check he nobly repaired, when after the second battle of Chatillon, he even dared, with a handful of men, to undertake the conquest of that very city, before which a successful army had just been making vain attempts. The success of an expedition which appeared rash at best, raised his reputation

reputation to the highest pitch and struck a mortal blow into the Vendée.

The flames of Chatillon lighted on the republican armies, their courage revived, and Chollet very soon witnessed the total ruin of the insurgents. Restored to his army, sometime after the passage of the Loire, he pursued the fugitives who had again become formidable by repeated victories, and although defeated himself in several skirmishes, he at length totally crushed them by the battle of Mans. That celebrated battle was the last of his exploits, and the last step which led him to the grave. Ordered to Paris by a Nero jealous of his fame, this new Corbulon arrested, put in prison, under pretence of a chimerical conspiracy, soon expiated upon a scaffold the crime of having successfully served his country ; a crime which the tyrants of all ages never have learned to forgive.

Hoche was already celebrated for his victories on the Rhine and the Moselle. When he appeared in the Vendée, the contest was drawing to a close ; nor had he to reap any of those brilliant triumphs which dazzle the eyes of the vulgar and commonly flatter the self-love of generals ; but his glory was not less substantial in the eye of the calm observer, and



and his prudence gained him more eulogiums, than his courage could have done. His wife and well regulated conduct, under very delicate circumstances, justly procured him the title of the pacificator of the Vendée, and will for ever serve as a model to military chiefs in the same difficult circumstances. Severe with the seditious, mild and humane to the peaceable peasant, he enjoyed the esteem of all the Vendéans, to whom he was at the same time the restorer of religion and peace. In short that celebrated general seemed only to have been sent into the Vendée, to demonstrate that it is often easier to conquer than to take the proper advantage of victory, and that if force can triumph over an enemy, moderation only can disarm him.

The Vendean chiefs, on the other hand, exhibit characters no less astonishing. With soldiers half armed, inexperienced, and almost undisciplined, without any other ammunition or artillery than what they could take from the enemy, without military administrations, without any other money than what they procured from their own revenues, without any kind of credit, without any of those resources which are at this day indispensably necessary to carry on war, they did not hesitate to take the lead in an insurrection, which  
obliged



obliged them to combat against the most powerful nation in the world. That war was doubtless odious in its origin, and disadvantageous in its effects; it only tended to convert the Vendée into a heap of ruins and ashes. But let us suppose for a moment that their efforts had been aimed against our foreign enemies, with what glory would they not have been covered by such a noble defence! Let us then deplore the infatuation of the Vendean chiefs, let us blame their fatal obstinacy; but let us do justice to their talents, and examine with the discernment of an impartial historian what were their abilities and their military defects.

Bonchamps, D'Elbée, and Domagné, in addition to their distinguished valour, possessed talents which they displayed but too often to the injury of the republic. There were, however, degrees in their abilities easy to be discriminated: D'Elbée excelled in forming a plan of attack, Domagné in a *coup de main*, and Bonchamps, superior to the two former in the military art, was the most dexterous in repairing a defeat\*. Charrette, who,  
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\* If I may venture to give credit to the testimony of several Vendean chiefs, Bonchamps possessed more military talents than

of all the Vendean chiefs, gave the most employment to the republican forces, possessed in a superior degree to the three others, that kind of prudence which is very seldom found in the head of a party. By skilful management, he always contrived to repair his defeats, and even to reap advantage from them. After the passage of the Loire, surrounded by republicans armies, he succeeded in keeping his footing in the country, and ruined the republican divisions without coming to decisive engagements. Taking advantage of the misunderstandings of his adversaries, one day he threatened some particular district, and the next day fell upon another; at one time he drew the enemy into the open country, as if he designed to give them battle, and in the night he fell upon their rear, cut off a convoy that was their only resource, and thereby obliged them to fall back upon the frontiers. Beloved by the soldiers and feared by his officers, no general had more absolute authority, or was better obeyed. A groundless jealousy of the chiefs of the

any of his colleagues! wounded in several battles, he appeared but seldom at the head of armies; it was that which lost him part of his reputation. I shall not undertake to decide upon his character: I leave that to such military men as knew him.

Upper

Upper Vendée, the massacre at Machecoul, and some other actions of that nature tarnished the splendor of his military virtues.

Lescures and Laroche-Jaquelin, rivals and friends in the career of the military profession, formed a splendid union of daring courage and superior talents, although no two men were ever of more different characters or more opposite tempers. Lescures, from the weakness and apparent effeminacy of his form, seemed little fitted for warlike exploits. Laroche-Jaquelin with a strong constitution, expressive looks, and a warlike countenance, seemed born for fighting. The former mild, polite, of an affectionate and tender disposition, seemed designed by nature to constitute the happiness of his worthy and respectable wife, and increase the charms of domestic and social attachment. Laroche-Jaquelin, on the contrary, with his martial air, his sharp and laconic way of speaking, seemed intended by his very nature to live in the bustle of a camp: this difference between these two warriors was even visible in the heat of battle. In an engagement where they equally hazarded their lives, it would have been difficult to decide which of the two bore away the palm of valour; but by the

the calm, serene, and sometimes smiling countenance of Lescures, it was easy to perceive that he only sought to animate his soldiers; whilst from the fierce looks of Laroche-Jaquelin, and his animated motions, you might distinguish the warrior carried away by his impetuosity. Like Mornai, the philosopher, Lescures, in the heat of battle, never stained his sword with the blood of his enemies; humane from natural disposition, and generous in his actions, the disarmed enemy found in him a brother and protector.

Laroche-Jaquelin devoured, as it were, the enemy with his looks as he fell beneath his sword; he was also deficient in that moderation which can forgive those whom it has vanquished. Lescures, more slow in determination, and more prudent in counsel, combined all the possible chances of fortune to arrange an army and ensure it success. Laroche-Jaquelin, in the beginning of an engagement, rushing with impetuosity into the enemy's ranks, seemed to carry victory by surprise: the prudence of the former inspired the Vendéans with more confidence in the moment of attack: the rashness of the latter was more calculated to reanimate their courage at the critical moment of close quarters. The presence of both rendered

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their

their followers in some measure invincible : it has also been particularly remarked, that they were hardly ever conquered except when separated ; and that nothing might be wanting to the difference of character in these two warriors, one after having seen the ruin of his party, received the mortal blow while endeavouring by his exertions to recal victory ; the other, in rashly pursuing a wretched fugitive, rushed to certain death, and fell at a moment in which his loss inevitably hastened the destruction of his friends. Such was the fate of these two great commanders, to whom nothing was wanting to acquire immortal fame, but to have fought against the enemies of their country\*.

\* Besides the chiefs of the two parties whom I have just named, there are many others will certainly not be overlooked by historians in the list of celebrated men who have distinguished themselves in this fatal epocha. Without mentioning those who are still alive, I cannot help regretting that this short view has not admitted of my giving anecdotes of Beysser, the Beaupuys, the Marceaus, and also of the Marignys, the Beauvoilliers, the Rouarans, &c. who fought on the opposite side.

## CHAPTER IX.

STATE OF COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE IN THE  
VENDEE, SINCE THE WAR.

I have just executed a painful task, in giving an historical sketch of such bloody catastrophes ; nor is it without reluctance, that I have entered on the description of so many shocking occurrences. It is with the greatest pleasure, therefore, I now withdraw my attention from objects so distressing towards others of an infinitely more agreeable nature, those of agriculture and commerce. I shall examine the progressive steps which led to their decline in the Vendée, from what causes they fell into ruin, and by what means they have been recently restored.

The campaign of 1792 greatly injured the commerce of the Vendée ; but as these troubles broke out late, the state of agriculture was but

little affected. The exportations of that year may be valued at a quarter of the usual amount, and the Importations at one half. From this calculation it follows that the Vendée was beginning to lose considerably by its commerce.

In 1793, the evil made further progress; less seed was sown than in the preceding year; the number of persons employed in the war, and consequently taken from agriculture, must necessarily have occasioned it considerable injury. That year's harvest was reduced also to a quarter of the usual crops. There was hardly any exportation from the Vendée and importations became indispensably necessary, although they could hardly be valued at more than a third of the usual consumption; money became also extremely scarce, since much was paid, and little or nothing received.

The campaign of 1794, or of the second year, gave the mortal blow to these ill fated provinces. When we recollect that the Vendéans had in part passed the Loire, and that the remainder, pursued by republican detachments, and scattered as it were throughout the country, were compelled to  
hide



hide themselves in the woods to save their lives ; if we consider that the infernal columns had set fire to all the villages and cottages, massacred part of the peasants, burned in their barns or lofts the corn and fodder, killed or devoured more than eleven hundred thousand oxen, and an innumerable quantity of ewes and sheep, carried off or destroyed all the horses and mules in the country, consumed by fire all the wool, linen, hemp, and every kind of moveable, it may easily be conceived that the Vendée must have been totally ruined\*. Agriculture and commerce were annihilated at the same time, and if that dreadful state of things had continued a few years, I make no doubt but the Vendéans would have been reduced to the situation of American savages, and

\* Vide Note, page 160.

“ Pillage was carried to its highest pitch ; the military, instead of minding their business, only thought of filling their knapsacks, and endeavouring to perpetuate a war so very useful to their interests ; many common soldiers acquired fifty thousand livres and more : some were seen covered with jewels, and launching into every species of the most shameful prodigality. The habit of pillage extended the bad effects of that blameable disposition even to the very patriots themselves, and their property has in a thousand instances become the prey of the very men sent to defend them.”——*Lequinio*, page 13.

live

live like them upon the produce of their plunder among the neighbouring people.

Peace at length restored tranquillity to the unfortunate Vendée ; the third year afforded happier days. On the happy news of peace the peasant issued from the woods which had served him for shelter, and sought, beneath the ashes which covered the scite of his former habitation, for the agricultural instruments which he had there concealed ; but in vain did he attempt to resume his rural labours. Without shelter from the severity of the weather, without cattle to assist him in his labour, without money to purchase seed and bread till the next harvest, he saw on every side nothing but famine, despair, and death.

Agriculture was annihilated without resource, if the proprietors had not afforded assistance to their tenants. Although exhausted by a disastrous war, they made fresh efforts, sold the most valuable effects which they had been able to preserve, and even disposed of a part of their property, or borrowed at an extravagant interest, to rebuild their farms, stock them with fresh cattle, and support their unfortunate labourers. The loss which the proprietors suffered was so much the more considerable

considerable, as by sacrificing a part of their property to preserve the rest, they found themselves not only obliged to forgive the tenants the rents of former years of which they had not received a farthing, but also to stipulate in the fresh leases which they granted, that the farmers should for some years pay nothing. So many sacrifices and losses impoverished them to such a degree, that the greatest part of them were reduced during several years to subsist upon the most humiliating charity. From what I have stated, it must easily be conceived, that in the third year there was no kind of commerce in the Vendée, and that consequently the importations and exportations were absolutely null.

During the fourth year the unfortunate situation of the Vendée was far from amelioriated. Whether it was that the peasants could not work the ground properly, or that the year was naturally barren, the little corn which they had sown did not succeed, and the husbandman hardly reaped the seed which he had thrown into the ground. Compelled to buy for his own consumption, he sold one half of the live stock which he had bought and the hay intended for the feed of his plough oxen, and went to his neighbours to purchase that wheat at a high price,

price, which nature seemed to have refused him. From what I have said, the reader must be convinced, that such a barren year gave the last deadly blow to the trade and agriculture of the Vendée. I will venture to assert, that at that period fifteen thousand livres in specie could not have been found throughout the whole country, and the richest farmers in it were reduced to beggary. Nothing could present a more affecting sight, than to see these venerable husbandmen going by night to the houses of the proprietors to solicit, with tears, assistance for their starving families : whilst others, less ashamed, went from door to door among those who were once rich, publicly begging the morsel of bread which was not always granted them ; so general was the distress ! There is reason to believe that the greatest part of the peasants would have quitted the country, to go in search of a more productive and less injured soil, if the prospect of a most plentiful harvest, promising an end to their calamities, had not given them courage to bear up against them. The so much wished for harvest of the fifth year at length mitigated the unfortunate situation of the Vendéans a little ; but it could not make good the losses of the preceding year. The farmer had been obliged from distress to let two thirds of his land lay fallow ; he had no more cattle to sell :  
thus

thus all the assistance he received, was merely sufficient to keep him from starving, and to raise his hopes for the ensuing year.

Hay was almost the only article of exportation, and therefore very little specie flowed into the country. The harvests of the sixth and seventh years were tolerably plentiful; but from the troubles in Normandy, the price of cattle kept very low.\*

These prices advanced in the two subsequent years eight and nine; and if they continue to keep up for some years more, the Vendée may hope to regain a part of its ancient splendour. This country is still very far from repairing its losses; it begins indeed to rise from its ruins; but to render it flourishing, much more effectual

\* There is no province in France whose prosperity is more connected with that of the Vendée, than Normandy; these two countries supply each other; the disasters of the one always affect the other: Normandy, which rears but few cattle, takes lean cattle from Poitou, to fatten and supply the capital; and on the other hand, the trade of Poitou would languish, the moment the Normans ceased to frequent their fairs. The war of the Vendée, therefore, was as injurious to the Normans, as that of the Chouans for the Vendéans.

assistance must be given it, than what it has hitherto received. Before we conclude this chapter, I ought to mention the efforts which Government has unremittingly made to repair the disasters of civil war ; and although they have hitherto been almost unsuccessful, they do no less honour to its benevolent views.

From the moment the troubles were at an end, the humane pacificators perceived that it was impossible to raise the Vendée without powerful and effectual means. Every thing which had been taken from it it was necessary to replace. But the public treasury was exhausted and could furnish but feeble resources. The first object which struck them was the absolute want of working tools, agricultural instruments, and iron ; these were purchased at a high rate in the neighbouring departments, and distributed among the Vendéans ; but in this distribution, a capital error was committed, which rendered the assistance almost useless : the commissaries, instead of taking the care of it upon themselves, and delivering them immediately to those for whom they were designed, transferred these secondary concerns to the administrations, and thereby totally failed in their object. In order to  
obtain



obtain these aids, it was necessary to make use of forms with which the peasants were unacquainted.

The administrators unwilling to run any risks themselves, were obliged to follow the regulations in the delivery; and Stofflet having again taken arms, they were afraid, or at least pretended to be afraid, that those iron instruments might be fabricated into weapons, and turned against the Republic. Although the last insurrection had been entirely quelled, they sold all the utensils, ploughing instruments, and iron which had been long in store for the use of the Republic: so that scarcely the tenth part of these articles reached their destination.

The second favor which the Vendée received from Government was the remission of the greatest part of its immediate contributions. This act of justice and humanity cannot be too much commended, and ought to excite the gratitude of the Vendéans; but I will maintain that the ablest financier would not have procured the tenth part of its contributions from such a ruined country: this remission, therefore, had become indispensably necessary; and if commerce does not restore to the Vendée fresh vigour, it will for many years be difficult for it to prosper without that assistance.



All the partial means which have hitherto been tried, are still very far from having repaired its disasters. I will venture to assert, that even to this day there is not a more impoverished country. The principal cause of its distress is without doubt the scarcity of money ; a scarcity owing, as I have already observed, to the effects of civil war. If to this leading cause be added the entire ruin of commerce, the want of the most necessary articles of importation, and the local expences and taxes which it was necessary to pay, we need not be surpris'd at this absolute scarcity.

This inconvenience is still so strongly felt in the Vendée, that the tax gatherers, forced to levy by distrains and executions, cannot collect the amount of their quotas, without employing a crowd of bailiffs' followers and tipstiffs, who, scattered through the communes, seize and sell, multiplying the expences to such a degree, that if proper regulations are not adopted, they will very soon render of no effect all former remissions of the payment of taxes granted to the Vendée. I know, and the Vendean farmers know it as well as myself, that the necessities of the public purse are pressing, and that taxes are the nerves of the state: these unfortunate peasants have  
been

been more than once obliged to drive to the fairs cattle, though essentially necessary to agriculture, and to sell them at half the price they might receive two months after, in order to pay their taxes. At no time were they ever heard to complain of it, or murmur: in full confidence they patiently await the moment when the government shall turn its attention towards them, and take pity on their unfortunate situation.

Such are the actual facts which I submit to its consideration, and whatever may have been insinuated to the contrary, I am not afraid that I shall be taxed with exaggeration.

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# SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

# VENDÉE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LANGUAGE OF THE VENDEANS.

THE Vendée, like every other department at a distance from the capital, has a dialect peculiar to itself, and which would not be understood at ten leagues from its own borders. It is in a great measure composed of corrupted Latin and French, of some English and Celtic words, and  
of

of a few others, the derivations of which I have been unable to ascertain, but which I imagine to be of Scythian origin. Although the Vendéans are extremely attached to this jargon, the generality of them understand French, and several speak it purely enough; but the greater part of them refrain from expressing themselves in pure language, that they may avoid exposing themselves to the raillery of their neighbours, who would not fail to joke them on their speaking *noblat*; which is the expression they use in that country to signify the French language. One rule which appears to be generally adopted in this jargon, is the changing and corrupting the greater part of the verbs, especially the last person of the present tense. Thus instead of *ils aiment, ils peuvent, ils font*, the Vendéans say *i-z-aimant, i-peuziant, i-faisiant*. The demonstrative pronouns, *celle-ci, celle-là*, are expressed by *quioqui* and *qualla*. The Vendean, for *qu'est-ce qu'il y a?* say, *qué quou iat?* the evening, with them is termed *la resciée*; twelve hours, *une rabbinée*; *rabbiner*, is also a verb, which signifies *to follow*. They have a multiplicity of other verbs entirely unknown to the French language, such as *se mâcher* instead of *se mêler*, *épiéter* for *suffire*, *bobber* for *partir*, &c. &c. The second of these verbs appears to me to be derived from the latin word

word *explere*; but I do not know from whence the others come. The particle *on* is entirely unknown to them. I may observe on this subject that this particle is seldom used except in the French language; in every other they make use of the periphrasis: to express *on dit*, they say in Latin *dicitur*, in Italian, *si dice*, in Spanish, *se dize*, *il est dit*. The English also regularly make use of the periphrasis, as *ils disent*, *they say*. It appears that these last have served as a model to the Vendéans. It is true they add the word *autres* which they pronounce *outres*; the Vendean therefore expresses the words *on dit*, thus: *i diziant les autres*. The same periphrasis is every where used by them, where it is necessary to supply the particle *on*. They murder the greater part of our diphthongs in a very unpleasant way to the ear; they pronounce *honneur*, *onure*; *chapeau*, *chapais*; *loi*, *loué*; and other words in the same manner. They very often substitute the first person singular of a personal pronoun for that of the plural, and very often also the substantive for the adjective: for instance, instead of *nous avons été victorieux de nos ennemis*, they say *j'avons eu le vaincre sur noutre almi*. They have also a multiplicity of substantives which are not only unknown in the French language, but which cannot be explained without a periphrasis. I shall give one instance; in order to

expres *de quoi manger*, they make use of the substantive *commentage* or *quoi-mentage*; thus they say : *j'avons ben prou de pain, mais je manquons de commentage*.

Another custom which they have, and which renders their conversation silly and disagreeable, is the repetition at the end of every sentence of the pronoun *moi*, which they pronounce *mais*. To expres *je le veux*, they say, *é-i-ou lou veu mais*. I shall conclude these observations on the Vendean language by a droll anecdote which was occasioned by the repetition of the word *moi*.

Some years ago, a Vendean, being ill at the Hospital of Douay, was endeavouring to explain to the matrons who superintend the house, that he wanted to take the air, and was always calling out: *é-i-ou veu prendre larre mais* (l'armée); these good women supposing he meant that he would go into the army, thought him delirious, and paid no attention to his cries. In the mean time the sick man was restless in his bed, quite out of temper, and requesting day and night to take *larre mais*. The following day was market day: one of the nurses, quite tired out with the continual cries of the sick man, went to enquire if there was  
not



not a native of Gâtine in the town. She was lucky enough to find one whom she immediately took to the hospital. As soon as the Vendean heard the cries of his countryman, he shrugged up his shoulders with compassion, and observed in his jargon that nothing could be plainer than the sick man's request. "What does he want then?" said the nurse. — *Pargoi ! il veut prendre larre-li ( l'air, lui )*. — After this reply, the Gâtinean, thinking he had sufficiently explained himself, went away immediately to attend his business ; they ran after him and enquired what *larre-li* signified. Tired with so many explanations, the angry Vendean ran to his countryman's bed-side, took him on his shoulders, put him down into the middle of the court, and went away muttering, that there was nothing so queer as those drolls of town nurses who pretend to be deaf because they won't hear.

## CHAPTER II.

## OF THEIR PRIVATE QUALITIES.

THE Vendéans in general are good fathers, good sons, and good husbands. Adultery and the greater part of the shameful vices are unknown among them. The civil war, however, has singularly altered their morals. The old soldiers, accustomed to live in licentiousness, upon their return home retained part of their bad habits ; and had it not been for the care and zeal of the ministers of the catholic persuasion, there was reason to fear that they would have corrupted the national character. It is therefore from respect for the religion of his forefathers, that the Vendean is indebted for his still remaining virtuous. His worst habit, is drinking ; and hitherto no exhortation or other means, have succeeded in correcting that fatal propensity : the public house, therefore

now

now is, and is likely to be for some time, the only source of the few disputes and domestic quarrels which take place in the Vendée.

In the course of this work I have had occasion to speak of their honesty, their loyalty, and their other virtues. I shall only add, that they have a decided aversion to law suits: the few misunderstandings they have are easily settled by arbitrators; they seldom have recourse to attornies; and when they are compelled to it, it is with the greater repugnance, as they have a maxim among them, that none of their saints were ever lawyers.

Their religious assemblies present to the observer the most edifying spectacle imaginable; and I am persuaded, that throughout all France, the catholic church has not more zealous adherents or believers attached to its doctrine.

The Vendean is very hospitable; if chance or bad weather lead a traveller to his cottage; he will cheerfully set before him the little refreshments he may have in the house, and will consider it as an affront if he offers to pay for them. In general they have an affected simplicity, which the traveller must be aware of taking for real; strangers will take  
a Vendean

a Vendean for a filly fellow, while at the same time he is amusing himself with them: they term this kind of joke *la gouaille*: they are very much given to it, and even *gouaillent* upon the gravest occasions. This pretended simplicity often gives rise to witty and original fallies. The reader will allow me to give him one of these anecdotes.

A Vendean having killed a hare, determined to carry it to his master who lived in the neighbouring town; but before he went to the intended place, he called at a shoemakers with whom he had some business. The latter wishing to speak with him in private, asked him to go into his back-shop; the Vendean consented, laid his bag down, and followed him. In the mean time the shoemaker's boys opened the bag and took out the hare, putting in its place a cur-dog which had died over night. The Gâtinean returned and without discovering the trick which had been played him, throws his bag over his shoulder and hastens to his master, whom he found at table with some friends. After the first compliments were over, he acquainted him with his success in hunting, and of the nature of the present he had come to make him. While the master was loading him with thanks, the countryman, with a gay and smiling countenance,

countenance, untied his bag, and holding the supposed hare by the ears, exhibited his head to the company. The roar of laughter that followed may be easily imagined: "How is this, Thomas," said the master, "is that the present you have to make me"? The disconsolate countryman answered not a word; at last turning the cur's head about, and examining it in all directions very carefully, "*Parguenne*," exclaimed he, *t'as biau faire ta mine de chin, tu n'en es pas moins un lièvre dà\**.

\* Ay ay, thou may'st make thy dog's face if thou wilt, thou arn't less a hare for all that.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF THEIR DIVERSIONS.

THE amusements of the Vendéans are as simple as their manner of living. On Sundays and saint's days, after service, they play at bowls on the road sides, a game at which they excel: not far off, in a bush, they place a few bottles of wine, as the prize of victory, which the losers are obliged to pay.

The seldom eat at each other's houses ; that only happens when they kill their hogs: they then give feasts to their neighbours, termed *les rilles*. The following is the ceremony which they observe: in the morning they play at bowls; then dance after dinner; at night they sit down to table, but it  
is

is at supper that the Vendean gaiety exhibits itself amidst flowing cans and pitchers. At the close of the meal, an orator, somewhat tipsy, gets upon a table, calls for silence, and in a truly comic style delivers some speech or droll sermon that he had learned when young, and which the company often interrupts with roars of laughter.

I once attended one of these feasts out of curiosity: the orator took for his text, "*Bonum vinum lætificat cor hominis*". Good wine maketh glad the heart of man. In the first place he endeavoured to shew all the advantages that we derive from wine; in the second, he enlarged upon all the vices and evils of which it is the source: the conclusion was a bumper which all the company was obliged to drink. A second speaker succeeded the first, and took for his text, "*Omnis homo mortalis*," Every man is mortal. One Michael Morin, a sexton by profession, was the hero of this discourse; he was wittily compared to the greatest potentates of antiquity, and it was demonstrated that Michael Moran surpassed all heroes both ancient and modern. It appeared to me that the moral of it was, that we ought to suspect the reputation of pretended heroes; that



men are essentially the same, and that a conqueror who does injury to his fellow creatures is inferior to the sexton who does his duty. These speeches upon the whole did not appear to want wit, though disfigured by the Vendean jargon; I am ignorant what new Rabelais is the author.

The Vendean have another game, which I believe is peculiar to themselves, and is of very old date, although very little practised at this day, on account of the quarrels it sometimes gives rise to; I saw an instance of it some years ago; the following is the nature of it. Two parishes or neighbouring communes challenge each other to a trial of their respective strength: they commonly bet a hoghead of wine, which is paid for by the vanquished, and drank at the termination of the combat by both parties.

On the day fixed by the challengers, the two communes repair to a meadow, or a very extensive field: they chuse on both sides an equal number of strong men; they draw a line of demarcation, and then extend a great cable, which each champion on both sides lays hold of with both

both his hands, and draws with all his might towards his own side. That party which pulls the other over the line, gains the victory. They then make a common repast, at which the wine flows very copiously. The vanquished then file off to their respective villages, leaving their adversaries master of the field, who finish the day by dancing arm in arm, and ridiculing without mercy the conquered in their songs.

## CHAPTER IV.

STATE OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES IN THE  
VENDEE.

THERE is no department in France where public instruction and the liberal arts are more neglected than in the Vendée. In such an extensive country there is not a single college, drawing, dancing, or music master; schoolmasters are even very scarce there, and the greatest part of them can only read printed books, and not writing. Let it not be supposed, that the civil war is the cause of this state of ignorance; before that fatal period, knowledge was equally rare in that country.

A man, therefore, who can read and write tolerably well, passes for a learned man in the opinion

nion of a Vendean peasant ; and in more than one Commune, they have often been at a loss to chuse a mayor and his assistant, because they could not find two men who could write their own names. This state of ignorance arises without doubt, from there never having been a town in all that country worthy of being so called. The Vendée, properly speaking, is only a collection of villages, without any common center ; and in this view, it may be compared to a vast body having many arteries without a heart.

After what I have just stated, it is not surprising that the Vendéans labour under the grossest ignorance. This apathy is so much the more to be regretted, as the greater part of the inhabitants have the happiest turn for particular arts, and even for the abstract sciences.

I have known several whose natural talents were astonishing. In a village near Bressuire, there lives a common weaver who, without any master, has learned to read and write well, and acquired the four common rules in arithmetic, Fractions, and the Rule of Three. Besides this, he understands every thing relating to ecclesiastical computation,  
the

the Solar Cycle, the Roman Indiction, the Golden Number, &c.; he has even composed a work upon that subject, which though badly written appeared to me very exact. Another countryman of the same district, a cartwright by profession, has made a clock extremely complicated, which I have at this moment in my possession. This piece of machinery has astonished all the professional men who have seen it; although the wheels are very clumsy, it went extremely well during the inventor's life, as he came from time to time to regulate and to keep it in order. I must also confess that since his death no watchmaker has been able to regulate it; the usual fate of this sort of work. This machine indicated the hours, the minutes, the day of the month, and the quarter of the moon: it served also as a village clock, by the means of a brass wire fixed to a hammer suspended over a bell at the top of the house.

In the same proportion that the Vendéans are qualified for the abstract sciences, I consider them incapable of literature and the fine arts; the mechanical even are very much neglected. There is hardly any thing seen in the Vendée,  
but

but weavers, carpenters, masons, cartwrights, and carpenters : they have recourse, for the other professions to the neighbouring towns. With respect to the fine arts, they are entirely unknown, or rather, they have no taste whatever for them. Place one of Raphael's finest paintings before them, with a clumsy daub of some alehouse painter, and they would not know the difference ; that which has the most glaring colours would be the piece they would prefer. Haydn's or Mozart's best airs, would appear insipid to them, compared to their monotonous tunes ; and the jumping of a Merry Andrew, would divert them much more than the finest dance of the opera. With respect to their poetry, I know only of a few songs, in which there is neither wit, rhyme nor reason, and which one would suppose had been composed in the time of William Tête-d'Etoupees, or of Foulques-le-Rechin.

During the war, the Vendéans animated each other to battle, by military songs, which were like those that I have just mentioned ; but their chiefs and officers had others very well composed, and written by much more able hands.

A small

A small number of literary characters may, however, be found in the Vendée, whom the revolutionary troubles brought back to their native places. These men, distinguished by their talents and learning, preferring study and retirement to the vain pursuits of dangerous ambition, disdain to make themselves known, and devote the time which they can spare from study to the happiness and instruction of their fellow citizens.



## CHAPTER V.

## DRESS OF THE VENDEANS.

THE Vendean dress is very simple. The men wear a round hat with shallow crown and broad brim : their hair is cut and curled like the priests. They wear a coat of a greyish blue coloured woollen stuff in the Upper Vendée, and of brown in other places, under which, they have a white waistcoat of thick woollen cotton, kept close to the body by a girdle ; add to this dress, a large pair of striped breeches, and a pair of clumsy shoes, shod with iron, and you will have a complete idea of the Sunday dress of a Vendean. The women's head dress, is an ell of ribband, twisted in a grotesque manner about their heads ; they wear a jacket of blue stuff, which covers an enormous pair of stays that reach up to their shoulders, and which is so fortified with whale-

bone, that in case of necessity, it would blunt the edge of a sabre ; two woolen petticoats, a pair of blue stockings, wooden shoes, and a great black cloak, loaded with ribbons of the same colour, and tied before with silver clasps, complete this dress, than which nothing, as may easily be conceived, can be less favourable to beauty. Indeed the Vendée is very far from being remarkable for fine women ; fifty ugly may be found for one that is tolerable ; but they make up for this defect by so many good qualities, that they have no reason to complain of Providence for their ill favouredness.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THEIR WEDDINGS.

ALTHOUGH love appears under rather coarse forms in the Vendée, modesty nevertheless preserves its empire. In general the Vendean married women go virgins to the nuptial bed, and there seldom is an instance, as in most of our towns, of a girl claiming at the altar the title of wife, which she has previously dishonoured by the fruits of premature love. It is chiefly at their balls, known by the name of assemblies, that the attachments between the Vendean youth of both sexes are formed. These kind of balls are given on Sundays in the open air; in the morning they treat their servants; the evening is entirely devoted to dancing and pleasure. The mode of making love in that country is something  
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of the cat kind. The most common piece of gallantry is to pinch the girls, untie their aprons, twist their arms, tumble them, and sometimes steal a hearty kiss. The girls, on their side, answer these marks of kindness by flaps and fisty-cuffs, which the gallants consider as so many favours. When the parents have consented and the promise is given, they invite to the wedding all the brothers, uncles, and cousins on both sides, and they are on these occasions so numerously attended, that more than a hundred guests are sometimes reckoned at a wedding. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the bride is dressed by young maidens, who put on her a head dress with very long lappets hanging down to her shoulders. Over this head dress is fixed a garland of evergreens; they then put round her a sash of ribbon, which in certain districts, the bridegroom alone is permitted to untie. The latter is generally dressed in new clothes, and takes great pains in powdering his hair; it is the only day in his life he can venture to do it, without being laughed at. When every thing is ready for the ceremony, the procession moves to the church. Two young girls carry before the bride, one a white thorn, ornamented with ribbons, fruits, and even sweet meats; and the other, a distaff with a spindle. Her godfather carries

carries to the church a cake which the priest blesses, and of which the bride afterwards does the honour at the desert.

I shall remark on this subject, that the greatest part of our *beaux esprits* who laugh at these respectable customs, are very far from being aware, that they are of very ancient date, and that in general, they have some moral end in view. The Roman weddings were not unlike those of the Vendée. They also presented the new married couple with a cake of new wheaten bread, which was previously blessed by the priest, to signify to them by this mutual and sacred food, the unalterable union which ought to subsist between them. They also introduced at the ceremony the distaff and spindle, to intimate to the young wife, that she ought to employ herself in the duties of her sex at home, and not run after vain amusements. The white thorn, in the midst of five torches, with which they attended her from her father's house, was the symbol of the cares of marriage, which a pure and lively flame would alone dispel. This is the true moral tendency of these customs, which are only turned into ridicule in these days, because their meaning

is

is not understood. I shall further observe, that the cake, of which I speak, was termed in Latin, *conforreatio*, and that since the time of Scipio Nasica, they confined the use of it to the marriages of priests and pontiffs.

When the ceremony is finished, they go from the church to the place where the wedding feast is prepared, amidst the sounds of fifes and violins, and especially of the songs and shouts of the guests; shouts, which bring to the recollection those of the Roman weddings: *io hymen, O Hymenée!*

The tables are generally served with more profusion than delicacy; and the mirth of the guests is so noisy, that it sometimes offends chaste ears. At the desert, the young girls gather round the bride, and sing social verses to her, presenting her at the same time, with a thorn. The meaning of this song is, that her happy days are past, that she may bid adieu to every pleasure, and prepare to encounter many sorrows. It is usual for the bride to cry during this ceremony, and indeed I must confess, that it is it not calculated to inspire cheerfulness.

After

After the song of the thorn, the *momons* come forward; this word I believe is derived from *momus*.

It is a kind of challenge that a young villager gives to the bride, to guests what he has concealed in a basket. This basket generally contains a turtle dove, or some other tame bird, ornamented with ribbons, of which the *momon* makes a present to the bride: three livres was formerly paid for this present; but they now merely invite the *momon* to the table, which invitation does not require being repeated.

I should have observed that it is the rule for the bridegroom only to sit down to table when the desert comes on: during dinner time, with a napkin under his arm, he is busied in waiting upon the guests. I consider this custom as an ancient relic of French politeness. After dinner, dancing begins, and continues till supper time. During the desert, the bride's nearest relation slips under the table and takes off one of her garters and a shoe: after many jokes, the garter is cut into bits and distributed among the guests, and the shoe is redeemed by a piece of money. During this part of the ceremony, the bride's  
eldest



eldest unmarried sisters spin coarse flax with a distaff; and the bridegroom's brothers are obliged to make a faggot of brambles; it appears by this custom, that the intention is to punish them for having let their younger brother or sister get the start of them, and for not having yet paid their debt to society. Towards three or four o'clock in the morning, the wedded pair privately withdraw from the company, and retire to some distant house. As soon as the guests discover it, they go in search of them, and always find them out. One of the parties give them an onion soup, and the others a plate of ashes, but I am ignorant of the meaning of this custom. It is usual for the pair to eat their soup, then to get up, and rejoin the company. It sometimes however happens, that the bride grows angry at this unseasonable interruption, oversets the soup, and throws the ashes by handfuls in the eyes of the intruders; but this is very seldom the case, and gives a bad prognostic of the wife's future temper in her domestic conduct.

The wedding lasts as long as there is any wine in the barrel consecrated to this festival; he who drinks the last glass, ties a string to  
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the faufet, and puts it on his hat ; this is the signal for breaking up : every one departs, and the wedding is over, to the great satisfaction of the young married folks, who with heartfelt pleasure, see their noisy guests reel off, after having undergone their round of pleasantry, and sometimes impertinence.

## CHAPTER VII.

## OF CONJURERS.

THERE are very few provinces in France, where conjurers are more in fashion than in the Vendée. There are men in this country who have no other profession ; they are known as such, spoken to with great precaution, and great care is always taken never to turn the back to them ; if a conjurer's hand touches your shoulder, you are sure to be bewitched. The only remedy in such a case, is to return him smartly the blow which he has given you, after which, there is nothing to fear.

Rain, hail, thunder, and almost every meteor, are under the controul of the conjurers ; properly speaking, it is they who give rain and fine weather,

weather. Their power extends still further: it is to them that recourse is had when any property is lost; it often happens, that this method is successful, and this roguery brings the conjurer more into vogue than ever.

Strange stories are told throughout the country of the conjurers, which no body doubts, and which are considered as articles of faith.

The diseases of men and cattle are attributed to them. As soon as the Vendean perceives one of his family attacked with some unknown illness, instead of calling in the physician, he runs to the conjurer, and beseeches him to heal the sick person; at the same time, presenting him with money to induce him to be favourable. If the sick person recovers, the credit of it is given to the conjurer; in the opposite case, he passes for a very uncivil man; they say to him, with Chicanneau to Petit-Jean in the *Plaideurs*:

Hé! rendez donc l'argent;

Le monde est devenu, sans mentir, bien méchant.

But for some years back the conjurers have lost part of their reputation. The well informed men of the country have so much ridiculed and  
provoked

provoked the conjurers with impunity, that the peasants begin to doubt their power.

The objection to their preternatural power, drawn from the circumstance of the lottery, appears to be that which has the most weight. In fact, the peasants easily conceive, that if a conjurer could guess the numbers which were to come out on such a day, they would have made their fortunes long ago ; whereas the greater part of them, far from being rich, are in a situation very little short of wretchedness.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## NATURAL HISTORY.

THE Vendée has no quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, or even plants which are peculiar to its climate. Its breed of mules, however, may be considered as the best in France; its fat oxen and sheep possess likewise a decided superiority over those of the neighbouring departments. It is also very well known that the vipers of Lower Poitou, were formerly very much in request for the manufacture of Venice treacle; since the revolution, that trade has entirely ceased. The country abounds very much in game, especially in hares and red partridges; these latter are considered as the best in France. As the Vendée

is

is, in a great measure, covered with trees and wood, carnivorous animals and birds of prey are so common there, that they lay waste, and do considerable damage to the farmers.

Among the former are wolves and foxes; whatever rewards have been offered by government to the destroyers of wolves, they multiply to such a pitch, that they are often seen in bodies of from six to eight, attacking and tearing to pieces whole herds of oxen. The only means that government can make use of to prevent the total ruin of agriculture is, to incite the Vendéans to make a more active war against them: the mayors might be authorised for some months, to call out a third of the inhabitants, and have a general hunt on the same day. The absentee who does not send a substitute should be fined. It is besides evident, that in adopting this measure, a stop would be put to that system of searching for arms, and authorising parties to carry them, which at this moment only tends to sow distrust, awaken individual animosities, induce the peasant to conceal his gun, and which in the end does not procure the republic a single musket.

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The most common birds of prey are the hawk, the bittern, the bustard (*milvus æruginosus*), hobby, the bark-flayer, the owl, the screech owl (*bulula*), the little owl, and the night owl (*noctua*).

The trees which appear the most congenial to the climate of the Vendée, are the oak, the elm, the ash, the poplar (*populus alba*), the chestnut tree, the wild pear, and the apple tree. Few countries possess so many medicinal plants; but excepting some particular kinds, I consider them as very inferior to those in the provinces of Niort and Thouars, which are opener and drier soils.

The soil of the Vendée in general consists of nothing but red and black sand, which, however is not wanting in fertility: there are also some tracts of clay land, and others of a spongy quality, the taste of which is bitter, and the colour black. There are no where any marly beds, nor of those whitish lands which are the basis of the Epsom and Sedlitz salts, which chymists term *magnesia*. The first soil which I have mentioned, is covered with a species of stony

stony heaps, which at a distance might be mistaken for tombs; these stones are of a greyish and shining colour, and are excellent for building.

The country contains but few coal mines, and those of very little consequence.

## CHAPTER IX.

PRINCIPAL MEANS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE  
VENDÉE.

THE following truths may be considered as political axioms ;

I. Subsistence is the source of population.

II. Subsistence has two bases : agriculture and trade.

III. There must be suitable modes of disposing of the produce of these two branches.

IV. Without canals, without navigable rivers, and without high roads, there can be little or no commerce.

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V. The

V. The increase of commerce has always raised the price of lands, and consequently given new life to agriculture.

VI. Government ought always to expend its money, by way of aids in those places where the receipt is deficient or in arrears.

VII. When it becomes necessary to compel the payment of taxes, it is a sure sign that the taxes are too heavy, or that there are abuses in the collection.

VIII. There are no purses from which we can be always taking, without putting something in again.

IX. Uncultivated lands are so many losses to the state.

X. The secondary agents of government, ought always to be placed in the centre of the country which they superintend.

I request the reader to examine these political axioms, and to feel their force, as it is precisely upon these principles, that the system which I am  
about

about to lay down is founded. If the bounds which I have prescribed to myself, permitted me to enter into details, I might treat of these axioms separately, and support them by a long train of reasoning; but I consider this method as unnecessary for candid minds; and with respect to those of an opposite description, I assure them it is not for such that I write. I am further aware, that the plan which I am about to propose, will find many enemies; it is in opposition to too many passions and interests, not to excite a croud of gainfayers: but I appeal beforehand to impartial reason, and the decided voice of the general welfare: if they are listened to, my plan cannot fail of success, and the Vendée has gained its cause.

Among the means which I am about to propose, there are secondary ones which might indeed be attended with salutary effects, but which cannot strike at the root of the evil. This end is to be attained only by general means: I shall begin with these latter, reserving myself to reply to the objections which might be urged, till I have explained them.

The first of these means is, beyond all dispute, to establish in the centre of the Vendée, the prefecture, the central school, and other establishments of that nature.

The second, is to render the Thoué navigable, and even the Sèvre-Nantaïse; I have been informed, that this river can be made so at ten leagues from its mouth.

The third, is to make two great roads, crossing each other at right angles at the point, which I shall hereafter name: the first should lead from Poitiers to Nantes, passing by Parthenay, upon the banks of the Sèvre, and to Chollet; the second should lead from Thouars to Sables-d'Olonne, passing the point situated on the Sèvre just mentioned, to Chateigneraie and Fontenay.

The fourth, is to give fresh activity to the ports of Poitou, to draw strangers thither by open fairs, and by permitting the free exportation of woollens, linens, cattle, salt, and even corn.

Each of these means require explanation, and I shall attempt to do it in few words, depending  
upon

upon the indulgence, impartiality and candor of my readers.

Agreeably to one of the axioms which I have just laid down, it is essential to public prosperity, that the secondary agents of government should reside in the centre of the countries which they superintend. Excepting a few districts of the Lower Vendée, which border upon Fontenay, that country has the justest reason to make remonstrances. In an extent of more than three hundred square leagues, it does not possess any establishment, any high road, or any canal; nor any of those regenerating means, so liberally lavished upon neighbouring cities. In the same proportion that the Vendée has to thank nature for the bounties which she has lavished upon it, it has a right to complain of the neglect of successive governors, who have all appeared to treat it with contempt up to the present day. It will certainly be matter of surprise for posterity, that in so extensive a space, in the midst of one of the richest countries in France, no man of genius has yet thought of building a town, for we cannot reasonably apply that name to miserable villages, which alone have hitherto covered it. If the prodigal Lewis XIV. who expended so many millions



millions in building Versailles, the Invalids, and so many useleſs palaces ; if his no leſs extravagant grandchildren, though ſinking under the weight of the public debt, erected Coliſæums, Pantheons, and other expenſive buildings ; if theſe princes, I ſay, had devoted the hundredth part of the ſums, which theſe ſumptuous and vaſt monuments coſt them, in giving vigour to agriculture in the provinces, in building towns, eſtabliſhing manufactories and other works of that kind, they would not only have rendered France the moſt flouriſhing empire in Europe, but they would alſo have ſaved her ſome part of thoſe political ſhocks, which have coſt her ſo much blood and treaſure.

Further, let it not be thought that kings alone have been guilty of this odious extravagance : have we not ſeen the Jacobins in their delirium devote millions to the manufacturing their pikes, ſo much vaunted, with which, as they aſſerted, they would overturn the thrones of Europe ; theſe Jacobins, who in the end became the ſubject of ridicule\* ! How many prevailing factions have we

nor

\* Had the Jacobins been ſubjects only of ridicule, liberty would not have had ſo much reaſon to complain. With  
whatever

not seen erecting monuments, which were pulled down the day after by a more powerful party? If we calculate the expences of the apotheosis of Marat, and others no less ludicrous fooleries, the spoils of palaces, and the mansions of the richest men in France, we cannot avoid lamenting over the mischiefs which have been perpetrated, and the good that might have been done; in a word, we must confess, that if divine Providence did not constantly watch over its own work for its preservation, human madness would have long ago overset the world, and replunged it in its ancient chaos. I hope the reader will excuse this digression, which is indeed but too much connected with the subject of which I am treating, and to which I now return.

I have before observed, that there were no establishments in the Vendée; it is notorious, that there is no one country in France, which has a greater and better founded right to complain of this neglect. It would be too prolix and tedious to give a topographical view of all the departments of which the Vendée makes a part: I shall there-

whatever contempt their arguments may have been treated, the sharpness of their pikes has been very sensibly felt.—*Note of the Translator.*

fore

fore confine myself to the description of that in which I reside, (the two Sèvres) which includes in its circuit, the districts of Bressuire, Aubiers, and Chatillon; in a word, the half of the Upper Vendée.

If we examine the situation of the chief town of this department, it will be seen that nothing could be worse chosen. The department of the two Sèvres, hemmed in on the south and west sides by the neighbourhood of those of the Vendée and the Lower Charente, may be said to resemble the form of an acute angle\*. This form once granted, I ask every man of good sense, whether it is just, instead of fixing the central point in the broadest part, and at equal distances from its sides, to place it exactly at the point of intersection of the angle of which I have just spoken. Such however is the position of Niort, the chief spot of this department. In order to ascertain the truth of what I assert, government has only to cast a glance upon the map of the

\* Its form is that of an irregular polygon; but as the chief town is situated at the point of intersection of one of its angles, I maintain that it may be considered under the shape which I have mentioned.

country,

country, and it will readily perceive the injustice of this choice, against which the northern districts have so long and loudly exclaimed.

I know that the inhabitants of Niort have constantly evinced their attachment to the revolution, and that they deserve attention : but would they wish to sacrifice the general interest to those considerations? I cannot believe it. I shall confine myself to combating the two principal objections which they have hitherto made against every plan proposed for changing the capital of the department.

In the first place, they argue, that in case of invasion by the English, it would be easier to issue the necessary orders from Niort, to direct the march of the national guards, and in short, to take all the necessary orders to repel them.

This objection at first sight may appear very plausible, but it falls to the ground of itself, as soon as it is examined. In fact, the English being able to come only by sea, we must in that case suppose, that there was no place on the first line in a situation to oppose them ; but whilst Rochelle

and the neighbouring ports are in such a state of defence, it is to be presumed, that if the English ever attempted a descent, they would direct it to a very different point. Thus, not only has this objection no weight, but I further insist that it may even be retorted; for if troubles arise in the interior of the department, and experience has but too clearly proved that this danger was more to be feared than the chimerical descent of the English, I may enquire how the agents of government, stationed at the extremity of the angle, can take those quick and speedy measures, which can alone stifle seditions in their birth?

Could Brutus have frustrated at Rome the treason of Tarquin's adherents, or the kings of Lacedemon have prevented the revolts of the Helots, if they had been at twenty leagues distance from the scene of those conspiracies? Let us then candidly confess, that the Vendée would never have made such progress; but rather that the civil war would have been crushed at its outset, if the administrative bodies had been stationed in its centre. The presence and authority of the organs of the laws would have been sufficient

ficient to keep within the bounds of duty, the few malcontents who stirred up this war: the Vendean, better instructed in his true interests, and viewing the enormous disproportion of his strength, would not have ventured to trust his property and existence to the chance of so unequal a struggle, and we should not have to lament at this day the ruins which cover these unfortunate provinces.

The second objection is not more solid. The inhabitants of Niort pretend that no town can be formed near the centre, capable by its buildings and extent of accommodating the chief authorities. This objection also falls to the ground, if it can be proved that it is possible to find a town adapted to this purpose. The reader shall presently be convinced that it is not difficult to find such a situation. After having thus refuted the objections, I shall confine myself to pointing out the inconveniences which result from the present state of things\*.

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\* It is very probable, that the inconveniencies stated by the author exist; but in the present moral and political state of the Vendée, the Government would act unwisely, if it removed the seat of departmental administration from a



The heaviest, doubtless, is that of which the people have so much reason to complain, namely, the being at the greatest possible distance, from the authorities, from whom alone they can obtain justice. The greater part not being able to undertake such expensive journies, are reduced to the hard necessity of neglecting their affairs, and giving up well founded claims.

In the second place, instruction, which is the soul of a republic, cannot be propagated, and remains confined to a privileged corner of the department; without a possibility of the majority of the people being able to share in its advantages.

The dissemination of instruction in the Vendée, is the only way to prevent fresh troubles; but let me ask how miserable ruined landholders can send their children to central schools, at the distance of twenty leagues from their homes?—Can it be expected that mere schoolmasters, decorated

town, the inhabitants of which are such examples both of good principles and conduct to the provinces around them. Niort during the war in the Vendée merited much more than the scanty eulogium of the author.—*Note of the Translator.*

with



with the pompous title of Institutors, will be able to disseminate those valuable principles of knowledge, of which they have not the least idea themselves?

The final result then of what I have just stated to be the case is, that the city of Niort is surrounded by those who have no connection with it, whilst all those who have occasion to go to it upon business, are much too far from it. I dare even go further, and maintain that the very establishment of the department itself is radically bad, and that there is not one in all France worse arranged.

The reader must recollect, that at the time of the formation of these establishments, the deputies of the several towns besieged the Committee of the Constitution. Every one wanted to have a department for his town; and as the large cities had a great number of representatives and friends, it is not astonishing that without regard to the centrality, they often carried their point in opposition to their competitors. What I have just stated, was absolutely the case with Niort.

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The neighbourhood of Fontenay, which is only four leagues distant from it, and that of the department of Charente which borders upon it, for a long time fixed the attention of the Committee of Constitution, but at last solicitations carried the point, and it was resolved, that Niort should have a department. It is true, that to obviate the numerous inconveniencies which resulted from that situation, it was agreed, that St. Maixent should alternately enjoy the same advantage. But the deputies of Niort had no great trouble two years after, in getting this inconvenient turn done away, and their town was maintained in the full possession of the valuable privilege.

As it generally happens one abuse brings on another; by making a department of Niort, they were obliged to dismember that of Fontenay, and at one stroke they spoiled the arrangement of both in their divisions. Thus, instead of giving to the department of the Vendée some parts of Niort, St. Maixent, and Melle, which were so convenient for it, and distributing the other parts of these districts, either in the department of the Lower Charente, or in that of Vienne, to which they are respectively adjoining, they even usurped part of the territory at Fontenay; the two neighbouring

bouring towns became the frontiers of their department, and only perceived a line of two leagues in extent between them. This plan once adopted, it was necessary to annex to this new department a sufficient number of districts : they could neither be taken from the southward nor the westward of Niort ; it was therefore indispensably necessary to resort to the northern side, in consequence of which the districts of Thouars and Chatillon were selected to make up the complement, or in other words, were sacrificed to pretended convenience.

It follows from what I have just shown, that it is essentially necessary to form the department of the two Sèvres anew ; its basis is too faulty to expect that it will form a good division.—Narrowed too much towards the south, it has too much breadth towards the north ; and do what they will, they can never find a common centre for the intercourse of the inhabitants of Niort and Argenton, Chatillon and Chef-Boutonne ; the distance between these different countries are too considerable, and their manners too opposite ; in short, the Upper Vendée requires an establishment within itself, and a particular regime. This point  
once

once determined, the following is the new plan which I would propose.

Distribute the parts of the district of Niort, St. Maixent, and Melle in the neighbouring departments, in the manner that I have just pointed out. Carry your central establishment into the heart of the Upper Vendée, upon the banks of the Sèvre-Nantaise, which spot appears to me the most convenient placed between La Forêt-sur-Sèvre and Chatillon; compose this new department of the parts of the former districts of Parthenay and Thouars, in following the course of the Thoué, of Vitriers, and Chollet, of the territories of Mortagne, Chatillon, Breffuire, Argenton, La Forêt-sur-Sèvre, and the lands situated seven leagues beyond that river, and you will have a well rounded department, not less considerable than that of the two Sèvres. At first sight, this plan presents seeming difficulties; I shall therefore attempt to do them away.

I may be asked, what will become of the parts of the districts of Thouars and Parthenay, situated beyond the Thoué, if this plan be adopted. In reply to this objection, I answer, that the nearest districts may be retained in the new department,  
and

and that the others will be very well satisfied with being annexed to the department of Vienne, having several times solicited that favor.

It may also be objected, that by this plan I take away from the departments of the Vendée, Mayenne and Loire, a part of their territory. I answer, that with respect to the first, its loss is very amply compensated by the new districts super-added; and that with respect to the second, it will have no reason to regret the loss of a few devastated districts, which their great distance from the chief station prevents being cultivated again; that in the second place, it would preserve a part of the divisions of Vitriers and Chollet, which would reduce its loss to a few communes; that lastly, this department is much too extensive, exceeding the neighbouring departments by near one third, which is contrary to republican principles, equally applicable to the division of territory, as to any thing else.

Finally, it may be said to me, how can you lodge your administrative bodies in a country town, and even in the open country?

To this objection I answer, that after burning so many towns in the Vendée, nothing could be more glorious for those who govern, than to establish a colony in the midst of these ruins, and to build a city there, worthy of its founders. Every thing seems to favor the idea; the materials of every kind which abound in this province, and at the lowest rate; the advantageous situation on the Sèvre, upon whose banks were formerly erected manufactories, which might again be rendered flourishing: add to these considerations, that the greatest part of the inhabitants of Chatillon and Mortagne, who were burned out, and who for the want of means to repair their houses, are still exiles in the neighbouring departments, would ardently embrace the opportunity of returning to their country, and would with pleasure settle in the new city. Every thing then seems favourable towards deciding the government to put this laudable and generous plan into execution. The advances which it would be under the necessity of making would very soon be amply reimbursed; in less than twenty years the expences of this establishment would be repaid; and without having exhausted the public treasure, it would acquire immortal glory, in raising a country from its ruins,



ruins, and thereby meriting and receiving the gratitude and blessings of the whole of the Vendée.

Methinks I already hear those cold calculators, whose political views never can take a wide range, reply to me, " Into what expences will you hurry the government? Are you not aware that, having been obliged to carry on a destructive war, it cannot afford to give any assistance towards executing your plan?"

I shall only observe to them, that it is calumniating the government to assert, that it does not reserve funds for encouragement of agriculture, whilst its attention is so bent upon that interesting object, that it is constantly offering premiums to those who distinguish themselves in the cultivation of lands, in the forming new plantations, or making experiments, affording them for these purposes every sort of encouragement and even advances of money. Government is too well informed not to be sensible, that nothing can be taken from a fund without some returns being made; that all uncultivated land is so much loss to the state; that to devote some money to the renovation of a province, is to sow



in order to reap a plentiful harvest ; it is lending its money at the highest interest, and opening inexhaustible sources of public prosperity : it must feel, I say, that by restoring its agriculture and commerce to a ruined province, it increases the means of subsistence in the state, and consequently the quantum of population ; in a word, that from the instant its receipts begin to fail in any department, it ought to make a point of immediately giving it aid ; since, notwithstanding the resources of the most expert financier, it is impossible to be always taking out of a purse without filling it again. Such at this day is the situation of the Vendée ; ruined and desolated as it is, it bears the same burden as before the war, which led to its destruction. It even sinks under the weight of its taxes ; the husbandman is obliged to dispose of his capital, and the collectors in the discharge of their duty, are obliged to make use of the intervention of a swarm of bailiffs and tipstiffs, which alone, according to the seventh axiom which I have laid down, is sufficient to convince me that the debt is too great, and that government will feel the justice of diminishing the taxes, or affording the means of paying them. The most practicable of these means, and certainly the most effectual ; is to found the colony

colony which I propose. All governments, both ancient and modern, feel the necessity of these establishments. Without mentioning Alexandria and so many other cities, which, under the dominion of Alexander, regulated the affairs of the empires which he had conquered, are we not informed that Rome and Carthage, those very flourishing republics, attained their highest pitch of prosperity only by means of their colonies? It may also be remarked, that it was in the midst of their most cruel wars that these wise republics thought it proper to establish barriers between themselves and untractable or restless subjects and allies. Would Carthage have been able to preserve her possessions in Spain for such a length of time without Carthage; and without her colonies on the Rhine, could Rome for so many ages have been able to restrain the efforts and irruptions of the warlike people of Germany?

It was in the midst of the wars of Africa, of Persia, and Italy, that the emperor Justinian built or established in his states more than fifty towns; and, as Evagrius has judiciously observed, the glory which he derived from these establishments, will appear more brilliant in the eyes of posterity

posterity, than the splendid victories of Belisarius and Narfes. But why quote foreign examples? was it not in the midst of the cruel wars which menaced France with ruin, that Francis I. and Lewis XIV. prodigal as they were, built cities, dug canals, made ports, and joined seas? and cannot the French Republic, no less powerful than Rome under its Scipios, or than France under its Charlemagne, undertake to build a city in a desolated country, on which the restoration of a province, the advantage of the state, and the public prosperity depend?—But it is too much to dwell on such frivolous objections; I should be afraid, by continuing, to wound the dignity of a magnanimous nation; I therefore desist, and resume my subject.

I have enlarged a little upon the particulars of the first means that I pointed out, because I consider it as the fundamental basis of my plan. I go on to the second, and shall show that the navigation of the Thoué and the Sèvre may powerfully contribute to the re-establishment of the Vendée.

According to the fourth axiom which I have laid down, it is certain that without canals, the most fertile countries cannot become flourishing;

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as soon as the low price given for his commodities impedes the efforts of industry, the husbandman is discouraged, and can no longer engage in any kind of speculation : but the difficulty of carriage is what clogs industry the most ; and no sooner does the expence of conveyance swallow up two-thirds of the produce of his exportations, than the discouraged farmer neglects the cultivation of all articles of which the carriage is attended with difficulties. His superfluity is in some measure lost to him, and often for want of a channel for sale, poverty besieges him in the midst of abundance. Canals then are of such infinite importance, that the prosperity of a country may be estimated by the number it contains. China, sinking under the weight of its immense population, only subsists by means of its navigable rivers ; Holland, in the midst of its marshes, finds its prosperity in the facility of its water carriage, whilst the greater part of fertile Poland labours under misery in the midst of abundance. In our republic, all the inhabitants on the banks of the Seine, the Rhone, and the Loire, are in easy circumstances, while those of the no less fertile provinces of Berry and Poitou can hardly procure money enough to pay their taxes. All these instances tend to show that there can be no trade without canals or navigable rivers.

Although

Although the Vendée is only watered by inconsiderable streams, it is nevertheless possible to ameliorate its situation in that branch. The Thoué, in order to be made navigable, only waits the will of the government. Some years ago, *Lenain*, the intendant of Poitiers, took up this business : an engineer sent by him to the spot, was commissioned to take plans and present memorials on the subject. These interesting papers were deposited at the time in the office of the Secretary of *Intendance*, and it will not be difficult for Government to procure them. But the deplorable state of the finances, and the misfortunes which took place from the maritime wars at the end of the reign of Lewis the XV. prevented the Government from following up this laudable design ; and although the engineer only asked a moderate sum to put it into execution, he could not obtain it. Nothing would be more creditable to Government at this period, than to resume such a useful project. There is not perhaps any undertaking of this kind in France that would require less money. It is only necessary to make a few locks, and to deepen in two places where there are flats, as has been done above Montreuil-Bellay ; where at only a hundred thousand livres expence, the same river has been rendered navigable.

vigable to Saumur, situated at about three leagues distance from it. All that is requisite then upon the whole, is to proceed in the same way as far as Thouars, at four leagues distance from Montreuil. I am convinced in less than ten years, the tolls which might be established on that river would reimburse the government for all its advances. This project, so easy and so little expensive, would be of the highest consequence to the Vendée, and in ten years would render it as flourishing as it is now miserable. All the surplus of the Vendean produce, conveyed by land carriage at a small expence to Thouars, upon a road of which I shall hereafter speak, might be embarked upon the Thoué, conveyed to Saumur, Tours, Orleans, and passing by the canal of Brière, might even reach the capital. Paris would also receive considerable pleasure as well as advantage in seeing Vendean merchants selling their commodities in its ports.

The navigation of the Sèvre-Nantaise would afford no less valuable benefits to the Vendée. I shall not enter into any details respecting the means of rendering the river navigable; I can only offer the Government on this head, the testimony of a few well-informed men, who have

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assured



assured me, that it would be possible to navigate it at ten leagues from its mouth, which also must be left to the engineers to ascertain. I shall content myself with observing, that there are many who in the course of such examinations find it much easier to cut the Gordian knot than to untie it, which government will doubtless take care to prevent. But on the whole, the advantages which the Vendée would reap from this navigation would be incalculable; for whilst part of its produce, by means of the Thoué, might be sold even in the capital, the other part, by going down the Sèvre, would reach the banks of the Loire, would sell to advantage in the markets of Nantes, and in the port of that town or that of Paimbœuf, might be shipped in the Spanish or Dutch vessels which traffick in these ports.

I have now shown the advantages which the Vendée would derive from the navigation of the Sèvre and the Thoué; I pass over to the third remedy which I have pointed out, viz. that of constructing two great roads.

If money forms the nerve of the body politic, it may be said that high roads are its veins; they alone  
were



were of more service to the preservation of the Roman empire, than all the valour of their commanders ; to these the French Revolution is indebted for its progress, and the Republic also for a part of its victories. When the barbarism which succeeded the reigns of the Constantines and the Theodosius, had entirely obliterated those ancient monuments of Roman glory, commerce was annihilated in Europe. This beautiful quarter of the world became a den of savages ; the arts and sciences disappeared ; the inhabitants were reduced to exchange their commodities only among neighbouring districts ; neighbouring kingdoms became unknown countries ; with the love of luxury, the relish for industry was lost ; and in a word, if the destruction of the Roman roads brought on the ruin of trade, the failure of the latter plunged Europe into the thickest darkness of ignorance and feudalism.

Since the revival of commerce and the arts, every government has exerted itself in constructing high roads in its respective states. France, from the number it contains, is perhaps the most convenient country in that respect ; but whilst the greatest part of the departments enjoy this valuable

able advantage, the greater part of the Vendée is totally deprived of it. Excepting two bye roads from Saumur to Chollet, and from Montreuil to Parthenay, in a space of near two hundred square leagues, I do not know of any road that can be deemed practicable : nor have the majority of the inhabitants of the Upper Vendée a y more communication with Fontenay, Nantes and the other neighbouring towns than with Germany and Italy. The Government must perceive how much this privation must tend to deaden all industry among the Vendéans, to confine them to their own districts, render them a distinct people, and impede all progress towards civilization.

The only means of obviating these inconveniences is what I propose. It is absolutely necessary then to construct two high roads, which may intersect each other at right angles near the new town of which I have before spoken. The first would lead from Poitiers to Nantes, and the second from Thouars to Sables-d'Olonne, preserving the direction I have already described.

With respect to this subject I must observe, that in the construction of the former of these roads, they might work on the foundations of the  
ancient

ancient Roman road, of which some traces are still discoverable\*. I may also add that the high road from Poitiers to Parthenay being already made, a quarter of the task is done. The second of the two roads which I have proposed, might serve for a communication between Paris, Fontenay and Sables; it would shorten by twenty leagues the road now used. On this head I must remark, that it is astonishing even to this moment, Government has not thought of changing the ordinary route from Paris to Rochelle, and send its couriers by way of Mans, La Flèche, Saumur, Thouars, Parthenay, Niort, &c. &c. which would afford travellers the advantage of shortening their journey, finding provisions at a much lower price than what they are obliged to pay; and in a word, meeting with much more convenient roads. The Vendée would likewise derive from these changes the advantage of selling a considerable surplus of its hay, and no longer find itself obliged to consume it without profit, or sell it at a low rate.

\* There are some traces of it to be seen in the town of Forges, and near the New House.

The last of these changes would occasion only a trifling expence ; all the high roads are in tolerable condition ; there are only a few bridges to be repaired, and post houses established. If the Government condescends to adopt my views, and to make the roads which I propose, the Vendée will want nothing further, and its prosperity will henceforth be insured. The first road will cut the new department from east to west, and the second from north to south ; the one will facilitate its exportations into the departments of the interior, and the other will at all times open easy communications with the sea ports. Besides these two great roads, which would run through all the interior parts of the department, it has already two bye-roads, viz. that of Thouars to Parthenay, and that from Doué to Chollet, the advantages of which are incalculable. There would then be very few departments in the republic, where the communications of every kind would be more easy ; and where, consequently commerce and industry might take deeper root.

Having thus pointed out the advantages which the Vendée might derive from the proposed high roads, I shall proceed to the fourth object which  
I mentioned,

I mentioned, and shew by what means a new activity may be given to its ports.

Maritime commerce is become so necessary to the prosperity of states, it is so much connected with the success of agriculture, that in general a dry sand, situated advantageously upon the sea coast, presents to the political observer more advantages than a fertile soil deprived of the means of communication. Athens and Tyre, situated in the midst of a most ungrateful soil, attained the highest degree of splendour, while the more fertile provinces of Persia and Assyria languished in the midst of barren abundance.

The marshes of Holland at this period are the sources of more wealth than half the kingdoms of the north; and we see England rule the seas by her fleets, and draw more treasure into her ports, than the most flourishing empires of antiquity ever possessed. France, as advantageously situated as her rival, has for a length of time disputed the commerce of the whole world: and had it not been for the errors of Lewis XIV. had it not been for the selfishness and apathy of his descendants; in a word, had it not been for the immense burden which the republic has had to support

port in a war against all Europe, it is probable that we should by this time have wrested the dominion of the seas out of the hands of the English. Now that the continental peace appears confirmed, it is likely that the Government will direct its views to our navy and our ports.

Although the Vendée has no ports on its coasts of great importance, we may be allowed to hope that none of the means which it affords will be neglected to improve its maritime trade, to repair its ports and bays, and, in a word, to correct nature in those places where it offers the fewest obstacles to be surmounted. It was by such efforts that the celebrated Cosmo de Medicis was enabled, in spite of nature, to create the port of Leghorn, and to draw commerce and industry into his states ; it was by such means that the Hollanders were enabled to surmount difficulties deemed insuperable, and to rescue from the sea a now flourishing country. Fortunately the French Government has no such efforts to make to repair the ports of the Vendée ; the most difficult task without doubt will be, that of engaging foreigners to resort thither. Even to this day, these ports have been so neglected, and have had so little credit, that the Spaniards who have business to transact



transact in the departments of the west, instead of coming by sea, and landing at the ports of Sables or Nantes, have constantly preferred coming by way of Bayonne and Bourdeaux, although the journey by this road costs them treble the expence. It will perhaps be difficult for Government to induce them to change their route, and to draw them to our ports ; but there is reason to believe that it will succeed, when it shall present advantages for commerce ; when permission shall be given them to export salt, and such surplus of grain as they may stand in need of ; when they shall find themselves no longer subjected to those minute and insulting precautions, which have been habitually exercised against them in the greater part of our ports ; when in short they shall see that the system of prohibitions has been abandoned\*. This would be the proper place to point

\* A liberal idea which it would perhaps become all governments to adopt, would be to leave all commerce free, and to admit of no prohibitory systems, with the exception only : of the articles indispensably necessary to the subsistence of the people. It may be imagined by some, that by giving that latitude to commerce, we should be liable in France to see our specie transferred to foreigners, and our manufactures de-



point out the numberless abuses which follow a prohibiting system, and what injury does it to trade ; but the bounds which I have prescribed

ferted ; but I do not think that this apprehension is well founded. If we prefer foreign commodities, foreigners have the same desire to obtain those of which we are in possession ; the human heart is every where the same : we seek for objects with eagerness in proportion to the distance from whence they come. In exchange for the monkeys which China sends us, she delights in the playthings of Europe ; the Peruvian gave up heaps of gold to the Spaniards for knives ; the African bestows his ivory for grains of glass ; the Canadian his beaver skins for a few bottles of brandy ; in short, the reality is every where neglected, while we run after the shadow ; fashion and caprice alone fix the price of the greatest part of articles ; tea, coffee, chocolate, and spirits have made the fortunes of men in Europe, because they come from a distance. From the same motive our European merchandises are sought by the Asiatics ; and whilst the European petit maitre enjoys the luxury of the *ananas* of India, the Indian prefers to the delicious fruits of his own country one of those apples which we every day tread under our feet. It appears from what has been observed, that were an unlimited trade permitted, there would be nearly an equal advantage.

An object of this importance, however, demands a discussion of greater length. I shall confine myself to the observation, that till I have proof to the contrary, I shall continue to think with a celebrated minister, that there is but one maxim to follow respecting trade ;—*Laissez-nous faire*.

to myself will not permit me to enter into these particulars ; besides, I am too well convinced of the wisdom of government, not to believe that this point will be speedily remedied.

The principal articles of trade between the Spaniards and the Vendée, would be for the former, grain, salt, fat oxen, leather, mules, linen, and cloth ; the latter would receive in exchange, oils, groceries, medicinal drugs, dye stuff, sheep\*,  
and

\* Our politicians have considered it as impossible to accustom the Spanish sheep to the French climate, and pretend that their removal from a warm country into a moist and temperate climate, would destroy one half of the race, and cause the other to degenerate. These declamations made too strong an impression at the time on the mind of Colbert, and deprived France of an invaluable benefit. To conquer these prejudices, it seemed requisite that a nation situated at the extremity of the north of Europe should prove to us, by its example and success, that the Spanish sheep may be easily accustomed to the climate of any other country. At the period of the revolution which restored the Swedes to freedom, that people reduced to make use of foreign stuffs in their dress, resolved to rid themselves of such an irksome state of dependence in that particular ; they sent to Spain for sheep, which in a few years multiplied to such a degree, without degenerating in any perceptible manner, that in 1763, the Swedish manufactures

and metals. Fairs might be established at Sables, and in other towns of the Vendée, which would soon become noted from the concourse of foreigners of different nations; for it is clear that the Spaniards ought not to be the only nation admitted into the ports of the Vendée; the Dutch and other allies of the Government should share equally in the same advantages.

employed forty-five thousand persons. From such an example of success in a country like Sweden, it may be presumed that the French government will neglect nothing to procure for France, and particularly for the Vendée, such great advantages, and augment the smaller number of those valuable animals, for which we are already indebted to its paternal care.

## CHAPTER XI.

## SECONDARY MEANS OF RE-ESTABLISHMENT.

I have just pointed out the principal means by which the Vendée may be re-established: I am firmly persuaded, that by adopting these means, this country will be placed in the most prosperous condition it can possibly attain; and without which it will never have either a moral or political existence suitable to it. Be that as it may, I consider the measures which I am about to propose, as the most effectual for the restoration of that country. These measures have almost all, according to the measures which I have pointed out, the inestimable advantage of bringing no expences with them, nor any advances; and if the poverty of the public treasure serves as a pretence for delaying the execution of  
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the principal parts of this plan, the same motive will not militate against those which I shall now unfold.

In general, agriculture is very much neglected among the Vendéans ; the destructive system of fallow lands is become a real scourge to that country. Out of two hundred and sixty acres of land, the husbandman scarcely sows a hundred each year. This general neglect is owing to three principal causes : first, to the want of exports ; secondly, to the difficulty of conveyance ; thirdly, to the weight of taxes\*, which scarcely leaves

\* The Vendée is so destitute of money, and possesses so few openings to trade, that the collection of taxes in specie will always meet with difficulties. There is no doubt but that a tax in kind, adopted with some restrictions, would be more advantageous to that part of the country. For such a tax nothing but labour is required. At the time of the discussion respecting taxes in kind, it was too slightly asserted and believed, that this system had never been followed in Europe. In the seventh century there was no other known in Germany, and even in France, nor was it observed that the farmers were more unhappy on that account. Throughout almost every kingdom of India, the taxes are paid by labour, or in kind, and there are fewer poor in that quarter of the globe than in Europe.

leaves the husbandman the common necessities of life, and consequently prevents him from attempting any kind of speculation. I may add to these considerations, that the kind of barley known by the name of *Baillarge* (*Hordeum Distichon*) which the neighbouring districts cultivate with so much advantage, are by no means suitable to the light and sandy soil of the Vendée, and that consequently, it cannot derive any advantage from

rope. The Chinese know no other tribute, and are prosperous. This tax is laid on according to the quality of the soil, from a twelfth to a thirtieth part of the produce. One part of it is employed for the maintenance of the troops and the magistrates, and the other is placed in warehouses for the public necessities in times of scarcity.

Invariable good order prevents abuses, and for ages this tax has never been increased. There is no doubt, that to their religious adherence to this system the Chinese are indebted for that splendour, which has raised them to the first rank among civilized nations; if this flourishing empire has existed with reputation for so many centuries, it is because the taxes in kind have prevented its peasants from oppression: the state only requires a proportion of what they raise; it shares with them the vicissitudes of times and seasons, becomes rich or poor with the people, and the merciless hand of a financier never seizes upon the subsistence of a family, or makes it pay the produce of a harvest which it has not reaped.

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that valuable resource. It is true that the farmers might replace the cultivation of the *Balliarage* by that of other grain, no less useful and profitable; but the state of distress into which they are sunk, puts a stop to every exertion; besides, the Vendéans, invincibly attached to the customs of their fathers, are from character hostile to all innovation. It is necessary then for Government to begin first with combating that spirit of routine, which in the Vendée is the greatest enemy to agriculture. The best means of succeeding are, doubtless, example and emulation. The colony which I have proposed can alone produce this emulation, and do away the evil of fallow lands. The Alsatian would carry with him into the Vendée the culture of the rape seed, the Limousin that of potatoes, the Breton that of buck-wheat; each would transport with him the species of industry most appropriate to his province; the native of Franche-Comté would teach the Vendean to put his milk to profit, and make cheese after the manner of his country; the Norman would open a new branch of commerce, by making excellent cyder of the apples with which the country abounds, and from which to the present day no benefit has been derived\*;

\* A landed proprietor of my acquaintance some time ago  
made



the native of Flanders might teach him to cultivate hops and substitute beer for wine, which nature has denied to the greater part of the country; in short the concurrence of so many different husbandmen would excite to industry and the love of gain; would raise the value of produce four-fold by the activity given to trade and agriculture, and, awakening emulation and the most active passions of the human heart, would rouse Vendean industry from the apathy into which it is plunged.

I have already spoken of the cultivation of rape seed, buck-wheat, and potatoes. If I have given the preference to these productions above every other, it is from the persuasion that they are the most fitted to succeed in the Vendée\*.

made this experiment with complete success; from twelve bushels of apples he obtained sixty bottles of cyder of good quality and well tasted.

\* I think, however, that the ground pistachio-nut, (*arrachis Hypogea*) so well known in the kingdom of Valentia, might here be cultivated with success: This plant requires a light and sandy soil, like that of the Vendée: its advantages are known; the oil extracted from it is almost as good as the oil of olives, a pound of seed producing a pound of oil: a handful of this seed will sow four square toises, and ten perches of land will produce twelve hundred plants.

those three seem destined by nature to prosper in the light and sandy soil of that country. The first offers many advantages: its leaf will be of use in fattening cattle, and its oil for the consumption of the country.

I shall further observe that it only requires one pound of seed to sow twenty-four toises (or forty-eight square mètres), which renders its cultivation cheap. The second often supplies Brittany during a scarcity of rye; it makes excellent fodder for cows, and is of use in fattening poultry; the advantages of the third are too well known to make it necessary for me to point them out; I shall remark only, that the potatoe is the most useful production of Europe, and that it is the real bread tree of the ancient continent.

Besides the means which I have just pointed out, Government ought to turn its attention to the cultivation of the chefnut tree. It appears that formerly the whole country comprised between the Thoué and the Loire, was covered with these very useful trees. Almost all the wood work of the ancient buildings in those countries, is composed of beams and rafters of chefnut, although at this day but very few trees of this sort are found in those districts.

districts. Its culture is so much neglected, that I am persuaded, in two centuries hence there will be none left in the Vendée. New plantations then ought to be immediately made; and if the Government will give but even slight encouragement, I am convinced that the proprietors will engage in them with success.

The culture of the white mulberry tree would likewise afford great advantages, and would open in the Vendée a new branch of commerce. The few trees of that species which some friends to agriculture have endeavoured to naturalise, have compleatly succeeded; I, nevertheless, believe that the best plan for stocking the Vendée, would be to graft them upon quinces, wild pear, elm, poplar, and a few other indigenous trees, and I have no doubt, but that they would prosper in a very short time.

Endeavours should also be used to procure from the Spaniards, in exchange for the productions which they buy, some of those fine rams which they breed. It would prove an invaluable benefit to the Vendée. The rams would cross the present breed, and I am persuaded, that in twenty years the wool of that country would

not yield in quality, nor in value, to the finest English wools\*.

The means which I have hitherto pointed out, only tend to revive agriculture and commerce. But all the success which they are capable of producing, will be looked for in vain, if unanimity and activity do not preside over the execution. Whatever zeal magistrates may have for the encouragement of agriculture, their efforts are generally unsuccessful. The multiplicity of their other labours is always injurious to that branch of their administration; on the other hand, the necessity they are sometimes under of executing rigorous laws, deprive them of that degree of confidence, without which it is impossible to obtain great success. Throughout the whole of

\* “ There are in Poitou, (according to M. Buffon) sheep which seem to be of a foreign breed, and which are larger, stronger, and better covered with wool, than those of the common race; the ewes also breed better, and often bring forth two lambs at a time, or two lambs in a year. *Buffon's Natural History*, Vol. 6, page 250, *Paris Edition*, 1765.

If these sheep were crossed by Spanish rams, I have no doubt but that in a given time the Vendée would have as fine sheep as are now in England.

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the Vendée, the people are accustomed to confound the law with its instruments, and to consider the assessor of the taxes as the author of them; they also fear their magistrates more than they love them; the protector is lost in their eyes, while they only view him as the governor. The ancients and moderns have all been sensible, that to render agriculture flourishing, it is necessary to give it immediate protectors. Xenophon informs us in his *Cyropædia*, that what rendered the kingdom of Persia so flourishing was the institution of superintendants or inspectors, known by the names of the *prince's eyes and ears*. No one is ignorant that if Charlemagne had not instituted officers, known by the name of *missi dominici*, he would not have been able to repress the numerous abuses of which the peasantry were the victims, and have given his reign that immortal lustre which rendered it the most flourishing æra of the French Empire,

From what I have just stated, then, I should consider the institution of new commissaries, under the name of *Promoters of the Arts and of Agriculture*, as very useful to France. These men, who should have no coercive authority vested in them,  
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and whose only arms should be a direct correspondence with the minister, and the respect attached to their virtues and talents, might effect the greatest good without being able in any case to do harm. As advocates of the unfortunate husbandmen, they would find no difficulty in gaining their confidence; it is to them that they would repair to make those secret complaints against the severity, and frequently the injustice of treasury law suits, the inequality of the assessments, the scantiness of their harvests, the stagnation of trade, and so many other inconveniencies attached to their condition. Freed from the troublesome and expensive formalities of petitions, certain of addressing themselves to men honoured with the confidence of Government, who would forward in a direct manner the complaints they might deem well founded, they would no longer form those secret cabals, those private conspiracies, and give themselves up to every species of discontent, the effects of which are to sour them against a government from which they think they cannot obtain justice, to make them listen to the insinuations of the ill-disposed; and, in short, to produce those terrible explosions which have so often endangered the existence of  
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the republic. I shall certainly be answered that the councils of the *Arrondissemens*, and the mayors, sufficiently answer the purpose of the institution which I propose. Whoever knows the human heart will not require me to waste time in refuting this objection.

According to the sixth axiom which I have laid down, Government ought always to grant some aid to those places where the receipts are in arrears : now, I will maintain that there are few departments in France, where the recovery of taxes is more difficult than in the Vendée ; it is, therefore, more immediately necessary for Government to give it assistance. The cause of the difficulty found in the collection, is not to be attributed to the unwillingness of the assessed ; it can only be imputed to the scarcity, or rather the almost total disappearance of specie. I would therefore recommend to Government to make part of its purchases in that country. It is always in want of stores for its depôts, food and cloathing for its troops : woolens, cloth, cattle, and other productions of the country, purchased by its agents, would constantly disperse considerable sums, the greatest part of which, after circulation, would revert to the national treasury.

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The residue would serve for the restoration of agriculture, by giving to the husbandman the means of making the necessary advances; for one of the prejudices which is most injurious to it, and which, unfortunately, is radical in the greatest part of Europe, is that of hands alone being necessary for the cultivation of the land; the experience of every age which has preceded us, serves to prove that the earth returns in proportion only to what is given it, and that a great harvest supposes a great previous expence.

The last remedy which I shall propose to Government appears to me to combine great advantages, and might be usefully employed throughout the whole republic.

There exists, in almost every great town, an infinite number of charitable establishments, known by the name of hospitals, houses of correction, &c. Let me ask whether it would not be better to remove these establishments into the country, than to pen them up in populous cities? The price of commodities, higher always in large towns than in the country, often reduces to the most absolute want such establishments, which every where else would be comfortable  
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and flourishing. I would therefore recommend it to Government to remove into the Vendée the numerous hospitals of Angiers, Nantes, Niort, and other surrounding towns\*. Burdensome for the most part in these towns, they would prove of great utility in the country from their consumption of necessaries of every kind; and for the maintenance of these hospitals, ruinous grants or other extraordinary means would be no longer wanted. A spring which rises out of a high ground, fertilizes the country around it, and waters in a thousand different directions; situated in a flat ground, it becomes a marsh, the pestilential vapours of which corrupt all around it. It is absurd then to place these kinds of establishments in the centre of consumption, instead of fixing them at the sources of produce.

Were these measures to be adopted, we should see the Vendée, now covered with ruins and ashes, soon change its appearance and put on a flourishing aspect; instead of those secret murmurs

\* There exists in the Vendée a great number of convents, which Government might purchase at a low rate, having been sold for very moderate sums, and where they might remove the above-mentioned hospitals.

and suppressed emotions, sad effects of misery and despair, nothing will be heard but songs of joy, the affecting tokens of general content and happiness. Peace for ever established, instruction spreading with rapidity, agriculture flourishing, industry freed from its shackles, exportation made practicable by main roads, commerce facilitated by interior and exterior navigation, the money of foreigners flowing through a thousand different channels, and even spreading into the neighbouring departments: such are the effects that would follow the execution of the plan\*. What a cheering and delightful prospect for a true citizen! what an illustrious and brilliant career would be opened to the Government! what bitter recollections effaced! what a contrast between these serene days, and the ever execrable æra of the reign of anarchy! Respected abroad, tranquil at home, France happy and triumphant would present to the beholder, the image of a fortunate isle, against whose peaceful shores the angry waves spend their fury in vain.

## CHAPTER XII.

## CONCLUSION.

I have now gone through the various branches of this work, and draw near the end of that task, which my feeble talents proscribed me. In my first chapter, I attempted to trace the origin and describe the manners of the Vendéans; the second chapter has been devoted to the topographical description of the Vendée, its population, and its trade before the war. Many critics may attempt to refute what I have advanced on the subject of the population, by quoting the accounts made out by the order of Government. I have seen these statements, and have not followed them, because I was convinced of their fallacy.

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With respect to what relates to commerce, I confess that I was obliged to found my observations on general views; I was obliged to draw the mean proportion between the exports of large and small communes, and content myself with such local information as I could procure: I can affirm, moreover, that far from exaggerating their produce, I have taken care to estimate them at the lowest average. Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, contain an historical sketch of the Vendean war. If I have sometimes enlarged upon this subject, I confess I could not resist the secret impulse which hurried me on. Had I been writing the history of a foreign country, I should perhaps have followed the ordinary routine of historians, and been the cold narrator of events. But in a civil war which had nearly effected the ruin of my country, of which I was a witness, and which cost so many Frenchmen their lives, it was impossible for me to restrain my pen, or my indignation at the various crimes which sullied the conduct of both parties.

The reader will also be sensible, that an historical essay may differ from history; that within the narrow limits which I prescribed myself, I was able neither to point out all the causes, nor  
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enlarge upon all the events. Further, if the impartiality which ought to prevail in a work of this kind, obliged me in some measure to do justice to the valour and military talents of the insurgents, I have never failed to lament the fatal blindness which led the Vendée on to its ruin.

Chapter VIII. contains some particulars respecting the interior government of the Vendée during the war, and the most celebrated generals on both sides.

Chapter IX. treats of the state of commerce and agriculture in the Vendée since the war. I am not afraid of being taxed with exaggeration in the picture which I have drawn of its present situation. I was obliged to mention in the same chapter, the efforts which the Government constantly made for the restoration of the welfare of that unfortunate country, and to show that these have hitherto proved insufficient. It remained for me to point out the means of attaining that end, which I have ventured to attempt to do in the preceding chapters IX. and X. To support the system of restoration which I have proposed, I thought it right to ground it upon principles which I consider as political



political axioms. All the means which I have proposed are merely corollaries or consequences, which I think ought to ensure them some success.

I leave it for the reader to determine whether I have accomplished the task which I have proposed to myself. I feel, moreover, that the subject which I have been treating is one of the most interesting possible to the hearts of Frenchmen. What pains me is, that my abilities are too weak to express all the importance of the subject.

Governors! O ye whose eyes are constantly fixed upon the existence and prosperity of thirty millions of men, remember always, that by your situations, you are like the ever watchful eye of providence, and that nothing without you can receive motion and life! The wretched Vendée looks up to you for its new existence. Buried under the weight of its ruins and ashes, it feels that by your means only it can be restored to happiness. Alas! to give some rays of hope to that desolate land, you have only to feel the desire of doing so, since you have all the means and all the instruments in your own hands, fit



to begin the work. Shut your ears against those who would wish to persuade you that the Vendéans may again prove ungrateful children! Be assured that the return of general happiness will entirely fill up the precipice which despair had deepened, and that the inhabitants of the Vendée, henceforth faithful to the voice of their common country, will employ only against our foreign enemies, that spirited valour which signalized their actions but too fatally in the course of our civil wars.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th or 18th-century manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, though the ink is faded and the handwriting is difficult to decipher. It appears to be a formal letter or a legal document.

Continuation of the handwritten text, showing more lines of cursive script. The paper shows signs of age, including discoloration and small brown spots (foxing). The text is written in a consistent hand throughout the visible portion.

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# N O T E S.

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## No. I.

THE first official news which the Convention received of the insurrection in the Vendée, in 1793, reached it on the 15th of March. Citizen Niou, the commissary of Government, wrote from Saint Hermand in the following terms :

“ CITIZENS,

“ By the resolutions which we addressed to you, on the 13th of this month, you must have perceived the deplorable state of the Lower Loire. A dreadful insurrection occasions the greatest devastation in that country. The bridges on the road from Nantes are broken down. There was a very sharp engagement this morning between the national guards of Fontenay and the rebels. Unfortunately the former were repulsed with loss ; the town of Chantonay is taken and laid waste. General Marcé is just arrived at St. Hermand with twelve hundred

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men from Rochfort and Rochelle, and immediately set out with seven hundred men and three pieces of cannon to defend the bridge at Charron, which the enemy wanted to break down. At my request, five hundred men are just arrived from Niort ; I expect as many from Rochelle and Rochfort. We cannot, in fact, assemble too many troops. The insurgents are composed of several bodies ; that which attacked my troops this morning, consisted of about three thousand men. They are commanded by experienced leaders ; and their manœuvres are more skilful than could be expected."

On the same day (the 18th of March) the minister at war transmitted to the Convention, the particulars relative to the insurrection, which he had received from general Verteuil.

## No. II.

The terror of the towns nearest the place of insurrection, cannot be described. An idea may be formed of it by the letter which the administrators of the Lower Loire wrote on the 11th of March, 1793, to the neighbouring departments.

" Brethren and friends, fly to our assistance ! our department is in flames : a general insurrection has just broken out ; the alarm bell is every where sounding ; the insurgents pillaging, assassinating, and burning every thing.

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The patriots, few in number, are every where falling sacrifices to the fury and fanaticism of the insurgents. If you have any troops to lend us, or means of defence to assist us with; if you have soldiers, men, or weapons, send them to us; never were they more wanted."

### No. III.

The following is the official report which the representatives of the people, accompanying the army of the coasts of Rochelle, sent to the National Convention, respecting the battle of Fontenay :

Niort, May 26th 1793.

" In the situation we are in, citizen, colleagues we think it our duty to inform you officially of the check which we yesterday experienced at Fontenay, and of the attack with which we are threatened from the rebels.

" Last Friday (the 24th) we had met, to the number of seven, at Fontenay-le-Peuple to concert our operations; we were informed that on the evening before, symptoms of discontent had been observed in the army of la Châteigneraie, commanded by general Chalbos. We conceived that the presence of the representatives of the people might be useful in that army; in consequence  
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of which, three of our body went there in the morning with general D'Ayet ; they found tranquillity restored, and the same evening returned to Fontenay. But just after their departure, about six in the evening, general Chalbos was informed that the rebels were making preparations to attack him in La Chateigneraie, where it was impossible for him to hold out, because that town and its environs had been laid waste by the insurgents. He then thought it prudent to fall back upon Fontenay, which he effected during the night, in good order, and by the advice of his council of war ; by five in the morning all his army had arrived at Fontenay. At about half past twelve at noon, information was received, that the rebels were making their appearance in the same plain where they had been so compleatly defeated on the 16th. In an instant, the *generale* was beat, and shortly after the army drew up in sight of an immense number of rebels, formed in three columns. The latter had no artillery, but they advanced upon us with the greatest intrepidity ; the engagement became extremely hot ; the chasseurs of la Gironde kept up a terrible fire ; every volunteer of the free company of Thoulouse and of Hernault fought valiantly, like heroes, and with some other batalions, animated by the representatives of the people present at the action, were already making an impression on the rebel columns, when the brave Chalbos ordered the *gendarmerie* to charge, in order to cut them to pieces. It would have been all over with those hordes of plunderers, if the general's order had been executed ; but shameful to say it ! five gendarmes alone advanced ; the rest, frightened by the  
flight

flight of a few cowards, fell back, and ran away at full speed, trampling our infantry, which stood in their way, under foot. At length the infantry finding itself abandoned by the cavalry, and being overpowered by numbers, was itself thrown into disorder, and in a short time the rout was complete : our army, dispersed by the rebels, was pursued on the road from Fontenay to Niort, where general D'Ayet and brigadier Nouviou, having rallied twenty-five gendarmes only, charged two hundred men of the enemy's cavalry, and made them fall back. By this means they protected the retreat of part of the infantry into Niort."

I must observe that this report is one of the most faithful which was presented to the convention ; all the facts are exactly stated : those who drew it up were actually on the spot, at the head of the republican columns.

#### No. IV.

It was asserted at that time, that the insurgents procured their powder and ammunition from England, and that they were paid by that power. But these periods have been confounded ; in the second year of the war, they did receive assistance from the English government, but until the passage of the Loire, they always relied upon their own strength, and had no other arms or ammunition than what they could take from the republicans. To convince the  
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the reader of what I assert, I shall here give an extract of a letter from citizen Bruflé, a commissary sent into the rebel departments. This letter was read at the sitting of the commune of Paris, on the 17th of May. Although the author may be accused of some inaccuracies, and some false statements, it does do the less credit to the discernment of citizen Bruflé.

“ The rebels (says he) occupy, at this moment, part of the territory of six departments : — The central point is at Chemillé, Mortaigne, and Chollet. — They have collected in these places their reserves of provisions, which consist principally in herds of oxen, which are permitted to feed in the meadows. The number of rebels cannot be ascertained ; it is almost equal to the population of these countries, for they compel every body to march. Their armies consist of from twenty to twenty-five thousand men ; (Citizen Bruflé should have said from thirty to forty thousand men) ; they are armed with fowling pieces, having neither swords nor bayonets. They have no muskets, but what they have taken from the patriots ; the greater part of them are armed with pitchforks, spits, and sticks ; they have about thirty field pieces, but no large artillery. They are often without powder. The brigands have no sort of military organization ; they have neither regiments, different ranks of officers, nor plans of campaigns (this last assertion is incorrect) ; they march in columns of three or four men deep, led on by one of the chiefs, who alone knows the object of themarch. When they fight, they conceal themselves in bushes ;  
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(the greatest part of the battles which they have fought, were in the open field, and not under cover) four or five men appear in different directions, slipping along the sides of hedges and ditches, trying to get as near as possible, without perceiving any order of battle, and shouting like savages ; after that they extend to right and left to surround our troops, &c.

## No. V.

The victory of Saumur, and the taking of Angers, carried terror into the capital and the provinces to such a pitch, that it is hardly to be described. The following is the manner in which the deputies from the city of Nantes, expressed themselves at the bar of the convention on the 22d of June :

“Citizen Representatives, how long will you suffer yourselves to be deceived with respect to the situation of the departments of the west.—Nantes is on the eve of ruin :—Ordinary measures will no longer avail. The alarm bell of liberty must be rung throughout the whole republic ; all France must rise to crush the rebels. Without this extraordinary measure all is lost ; this torrent will sweep you away in its rapid course.—We shall soon have no other alternative but to mingle our blood with our brethren and children, and to die in the most horrible agonies of despair.”

A deputy

A deputy immediately converted the request of the inhabitants of Nantes into a motion ; another went farther, and moved, that the hour should be fixed, in which a general alarm should be sounded throughout the republic. Fear had magnified the danger to every eye, and France never thought herself so near her ruin.

## No. VI.

It appears that several members of the government were not without anxious fears respecting the march of the Vendean army, and that they were even apprehensive for the capital. The following is the manner in which a member of the Committee of Public Safety expressed himself, in the sitting of the convention of the 7th May, 1793.

“ Care must be taken to fabricate arms of every sort, in order to put Paris in a respectable state of defence, for the view of the enemy is to destroy this city. Forges must be put up in all the squares, in order to increase the energy of the citizens, by the sight of new means of defence.”

## No. VII.

It was asserted at the time, that the Committee of Public Safety had never been acquainted with the real truth,

truth, respecting the disturbances and battles in the Vendée: there is nothing more plainly proved. The commissaries of Government in general, stationed about twenty leagues from the field of battle, were forced to rely upon the accounts of certain prejudiced or badly informed agents; their falsehoods, inserted in the official reports, were circulated throughout all Europe, and held out to every reader as authentically true; whilst eye witnesses of the facts shrugged up their shoulders on reading these strange rhapsodies, and inwardly grieved to see the Government, thus deceived, take wrong measures, diametrically opposite to its real interests.

## No. VIII.

I have already observed, that the convention had been constantly deceived by the official reports transmitted by its agents. If an unanswerable proof of this fact be required, it will be found in the report which was addressed to the Government, and read to the convention in its sitting of the 27th of August, 1793.

“ We have fresh successes to report to you; the rebels are disorganised, the remains of their army are flying before our republican generals; pressed hard by famine, they kill one another for a piece of bread. A messenger, arrived this instant from Saumur, announces the capture of all the insurgents’ ammunition.—It is a fact, that we have not above six thousand determined men to act

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against. Authentic reports confirm all these facts, and you may rely upon them. All that now remains, is to rise and crush at once these brigands."

When it is considered that these rebels, described as hard pushed by famine, and reduced to a small number, made head, in a month after, against three republican armies, that they even beat them in several engagements, one cannot help being astonished at the extreme assurance of this babler. He was doubtless deceived himself by false reports; it is more candid to think so, than to believe that he wished to impose so barefacedly upon the convention.

## No. IX.

How could the Government be made properly acquainted with the causes and events of the war in the Vendée, when those very men in whom it placed the greatest confidence, were most earnest to deceive it? A noted representative of the people expressed himself in the following manner on this subject, in the sitting of the Jacobins of the 11th of September.

"This army of the Vendée, about which there is such a noise, is nothing but a collection of hogs\*, of

\* This reminds one of Edmund Burke's swinish multitude.—*Note of the Translator.*

people who have not even a human form, and of lawyers." It is curious enough to see attornies here confounded with a herd of swine and monsters, and held up in some measure as the leaders of the Vendée : This comparison is so much the more bitter, and unseasonable a satire, as its author, to the best of my recollection, was a lawyer under the ancient government.

## No. X.

It appears that after the engagement at Chantonnay, General Tunck had quitted his army for several days ; the official reports which were read at the sitting of the convention, of the 10th of September, all agree upon this point. These same reports stated the Vendean army at thirty thousand men. On the same day, a letter was read from a representative, stating in substance, that all the citizens were rising in mass, whilst the army of Mentz, joined to another of a 100,000 men was making preparations to extirminate the fugitives. In eight days hence, added he, France may be sure of victory ; but the success of these great measures, did not answer the expectation that had been formed of them.

## No. XI.

We have seen from the report inserted in the Note, No. VIII. that the rebels of the Vendée, were stated at  
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thousand men at most : the convention must have been very much surprised in its sitting of the 16th of September, to hear a letter read from a general in chief of the republican army, dated from Saumur, the 14th of the same month, which stated that the insurgents had assembled three armies. Such a manifest contradiction ought to have thoroughly opened its eyes with respect to its agents : if it was deceived, it may safely be said, that it wished to be so.

## No. XII.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 1793, one of the principal members of the Committee of Public Safety addressed the convention in the following terms :

“ The requisitions have produced in the Vendée, a fabulous army, which posterity will hardly give credit to ; it consists of four hundred thousand men, and was formed in four and twenty hours.” We shall soon see, that this formidable army did not answer the high expectations which were formed of it. The sixteen thousand brave fellows of the army of Mentz, were more terrible to the Vendée than all that undisciplined rabble ; in short, we may very properly apply the following line of Horace :

“ Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus.

No. XIII.



## No. XIII.

The greatest part of our coffee-house politicians have widely disagreed with respect to the motives which they assign to the Vendean chiefs for the part they have severally taken in this insurrection. Some asserted, that their only aim was to restore monarchy ; others went further, and assured us that their intention was to deliver up their provinces to the English, and, consequently, to become Englishmen. They might have saved themselves so many useless suppositions, if they had given themselves the trouble to read the proposals made in the name of the people of the Vendée to the republican authorities, by Gaudin Perrias, chief of the division of St. Stephen de Nontluc, dated the 14th of March. These proposals were read in the sitting of the convention of the 23d of the same month, and contained in substance, that there should be no more drawing for the militia ; that no horses should be taken from the farmers, except with their consent, and on being paid for them ; that the taxes should be laid on with justice, and in equal proportions ; that the directories should never attempt to violate the liberty of the citizens, by sending against them an armed force, which ought only to march by order of the tribunals and justices of the peace ; that the freedom of worship should be maintained ; that every minister should enjoy that tranquillity which the law ought to protect

protect him in ; that the churches should be opened for the celebration of divine worship ; that every person in paying his minister, should have a right to choose him, &c.

I shall make no observations on the justice or injustice of these proposals. I shall confine myself to one reflection only, which is, that if the paternal government under which we live at this time, had then held the reins of state, there is reason to believe that there would have been no insurrection in the Vendée, and that France would not now be groaning under the cruel wounds, which she received in that fatal and terrible explosion.

## No. XIV.

The representatives of the people wrote from Clisson to the Convention, on the 22d of September.

“ You were very much imposed upon, when you were told the army of the rebels was reduced to six thousand men ; they have still three armies composed of different corps, forming from correct information a total of a hundred thousand men, of whom fifty thousand are well armed and disciplined.”

The convention, receiving such diametrically opposite accounts, could hardly avoid taking wrong measures ;  
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and it is beyond all dispute to the fickleness of its agents, that the duration of that disastrous war is to be attributed.

## No. XV.

The convention, on fixing the 20th of October, 1793, as the period of the termination of the civil war, addressed the following proclamation to the soldiers of the army of the west :

“Soldiers of liberty, the rebels of the Vendée must be annihilated before the end of the month of October ; the welfare of the country requires it, the impatience of the French people commands it, their courage ought to accomplish it, &c.”

It were without doubt much to have been wished, that the aim of the convention had been attained ; France would then have saved many thousand citizens, and the Vendéans their property ; but one cannot help smiling at the idea of having undertaken to fix the precise period of the cessation of hostilities.

## No. XVI.

I think it right to give here an extract of a report made to the convention by one of its members, in its fitting of the first of October :

“Citizens,

“ Citizens,

“ The inexplicable Vendée is still in existence, and the efforts of the republicans have been hitherto insufficient against the robberies and conspiracies of these royalists. Trifling successes on the part of our generals have been followed by great defeats; thrice victorious at small posts, every one of them have been conquered in a general attack.—The army, which fanaticism has named *catholic and royal*, appears one day inconsiderable, and formidable the next. If it be defeated, it becomes in a manner invisible; if it meet with success, it is immense. Panic terror, and too great confidence have alternately exaggerated the enemy's force. It is a kind of prodigy to fools and cowards: an immense mass, but not invincible for soldiers; a chase of plunderers, and not a civil war for a political administration. This catholic army, which has long been stated at fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and thirty thousand, is now, from the report of the representatives, estimated at a hundred thousand brigands. — Never since the *mania* of the crusades, have we heard of so many men voluntarily assembling, as have suddenly appeared under the banners of liberty, to quell at once the too much prolonged insurrection of the Vendée.— We have neither seen nor known how to take advantage, by striking decisive blows, and carrying on a war of irruption, instead of making regular attacks. Panic terror, which always irretrievably ruins the largest armies, this panic terror has seized, frightened, and scattered the whole like an empty vapour.

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The Vendée has made progress from the inadequacy of the troops sent against it, from the choice of treacherous or ignorant generals, from the cowardice of a few foreign battalions ..... from the insatiable avarice of the administrations of our armies, who speculate upon the war, and thrive on the loss of battles; who increase their profits by the misfortunes of their country; counteract the military arrangements to prolong their advantages, and who enrich themselves by the slaughtered heaps of the dead.—It is then towards the Vendée, that your whole attention and all your cares should be directed; it is in the Vendée that you ought to display the full force of national impetuosity, and put into action all the power and resources of the Republic.—In a word, every blow that you strike at the Vendée, will re-echo to the rebellious towns. The Vendée, and nothing but the Vendée, is the political flame, which devours the heart of the body politic; it is there that you must strike. With a comprehensive and swift glance you will discover in these few words all the evils of the Vendée: too many representatives, too many generals, too much moral division, too much military division, too much want of discipline in the hour of success, too many false accounts in the narrative of events, too much avidity, too much love of money, and a desire to prolong the war in the generality of the commanders and administrators.”

This eloquent report is, without dispute, the most perfect, and the most authentic picture (except in a very

few instances) that ever was held up to the view of the convention.

## No. XVII

At the engagement of Chatillon, the brave republican, general Chamben being mortally wounded, exclaimed, "I die for my country, I am happy!" He expired in a few hours after. I must observe that the report which was sent on the 9th of October, to the convention, is incorrect in several of its assertions.

## No. XVIII.

The following is an extract from the official report of the representatives of the people, respecting the encounter at Chollet.

"Our troops would have entered Chollet the same day, if night had not overtaken them. They kept guard on the road till the morrow, when all our united columns advanced upon that town, before which the enemy had collected all its forces. A bloody engagement took place, and the fire was terrible on both sides; but the genius of liberty prevailed, and we were victorious.—The rebels attacked again the very next day; never was there greater fury shown than they exhibited on this attack; never perhaps was there a more bloody battle fought: it lasted from noon till 8 o'clock at night, when they were thrown into disorder on every side."

No. XIX.

## No. XIX.

The convention, constantly deceived by false reports, at last lost all patience. One of the members of the Committee of Public Safety expressed himself as follows, in the sitting of the 15th Brumaire, 2d. year :

——— “ The dreadful day approaches, in which the light of truth will clear up all the mysteries of the Vendée: that day, in which, with a bold hand, we shall tear off the bandage which has hitherto concealed and yet conceals all those distant intrigues, all those local manœuvres, all those military treasons, those different species of ambition in the chiefs, which have too long fostered this civil war. — — — Victories coloured over, half successes exaggerated, captures never made, fabulous narratives, all will be examined, and the nation will be revenged. — — — ”

## No. XX.

The battle of Mans was too important, and too honourable to the republican armies, to permit me as an impartial historian to omit an extract of the official report, which was addressed to the national convention, and was read in its sitting of the 24th Frimaire.



## “ Citizen Colleagues,”

“ By closely pursuing the infernal band of brigands, we at last came up with them yesterday, under the walls of Mans, which they had entered the night before, as we informed you in our last letter. Our cavalry, which had kept constantly at their heels since their defeat at Angiers, pursued them so closely yesterday, that a very warm action began between them and us. At first they repulsed us, as well on account of the superiority of their numbers, as because they were advantageously posted in front of Pont-Lieu. Elated with this success, they advanced rapidly; and were already shouting *victory!* when the genius of Liberty decided it otherwise. The column of Cherbourg, commanded by general Tilly, was there; and far from being intimidated by the retreat of their brethren in arms, and by the boldness of the enemy who pursued them, the soldiers of the division of Cherbourg fell upon the rebels, and, after the first fire, pursued them with the bayonet, put them to flight, and killed a great number of them. . . . . It was nine o'clock at night; a terrible fire of musquetry began on both sides, every foot of ground in the town was disputed, and the battle lasted till two in the morning; both sides watched each other's motions. The banditti took advantage of the darkness to evacuate the town. . . . . Chiefs, marchionesses, countesses, priests in plenty, cannons, covered waggons, coaches, baggage of all sorts, fell into our hands. . . . The streets, houses, public places and roads, are strewn with carcases, and this massacre has already lasted fifteen hours.

“ In

“ In a word, Citizen Colleagues, this is the most decisive day that we have had for the ten months that we have been fighting these brigands. . . . . Marceau, the general in chief; Tilly, commanding the division of Cherbourg; and Westermann, by their bravery, contributed greatly to the success of the day. The latter had two horses killed under him, and received two wounds in the engagement, but would not quit his post. . . . . What is particularly pleasing is, that this decisive victory has not cost the republic thirty of its defenders, and we have only a hundred wounded.”

We may fairly conclude, that the authors of this account had not counted the dead and wounded themselves, and that they did not expect this part of their report to be believed.

## No. XXI.

I think it proper to relate an anecdote here, which will justify what I have advanced on the subject of the unheard of misfortunes to which the Vendée became a prey in the course of the civil war.

After the burning of Chollet, the two contending parties for some time disputed even its very ruins. The possession of that important post gave rise to several battles, in which the rebels were often defeated, but sometimes came off victorious. Weary at last of shedding so  
much

much blood for a heap of ruins, both parties by mutual agreement abandoned it. Near Chollet, and round its scite, there are numerous establishments, known under the name of *bleaching grounds* ; it was in a species of covered gallery, that the manufacturers dried or bleached their cotton stuffs and handkerchiefs. For the protection of these goods, each of the manufactories kept a great number of dogs, which were let loose at night against suspected persons and thieves.

These dogs after the death or the flight of their masters, assembled at Chollet to the number of more than four hundred, as soon as the town was abandoned : there they lived on human flesh and dead carcases for several weeks ; this their food rendered them so ferocious, that after the peace, when the refugees of Cholet entered the town, they were like to be devoured. A whole republican battalion was obliged to march against these new adversaries, who did not yield the place to the inhabitants until they were entirely destroyed.

FINIS.



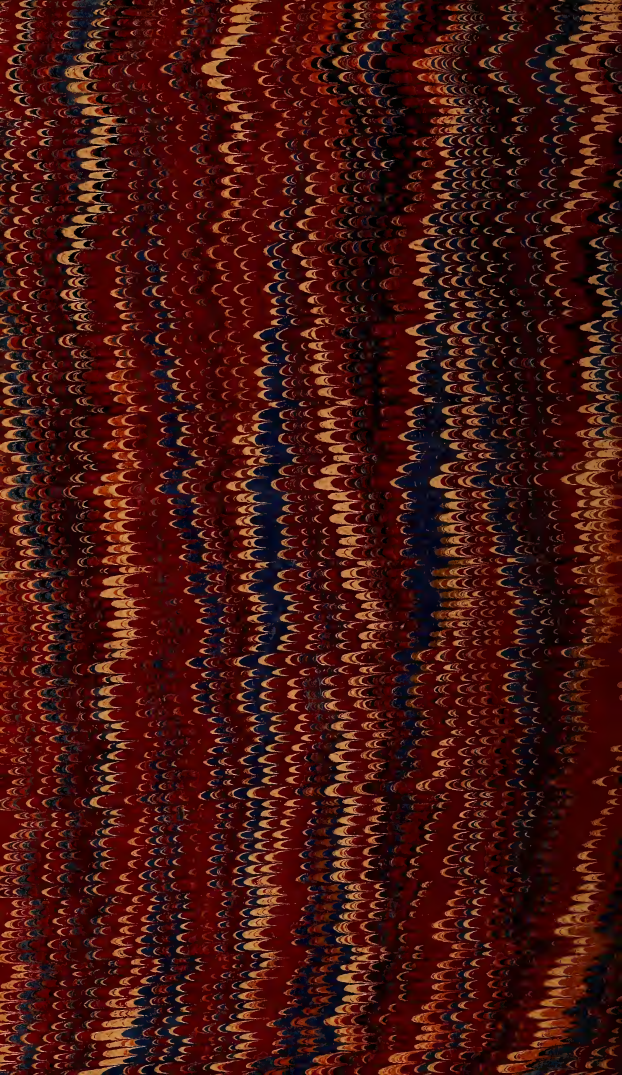


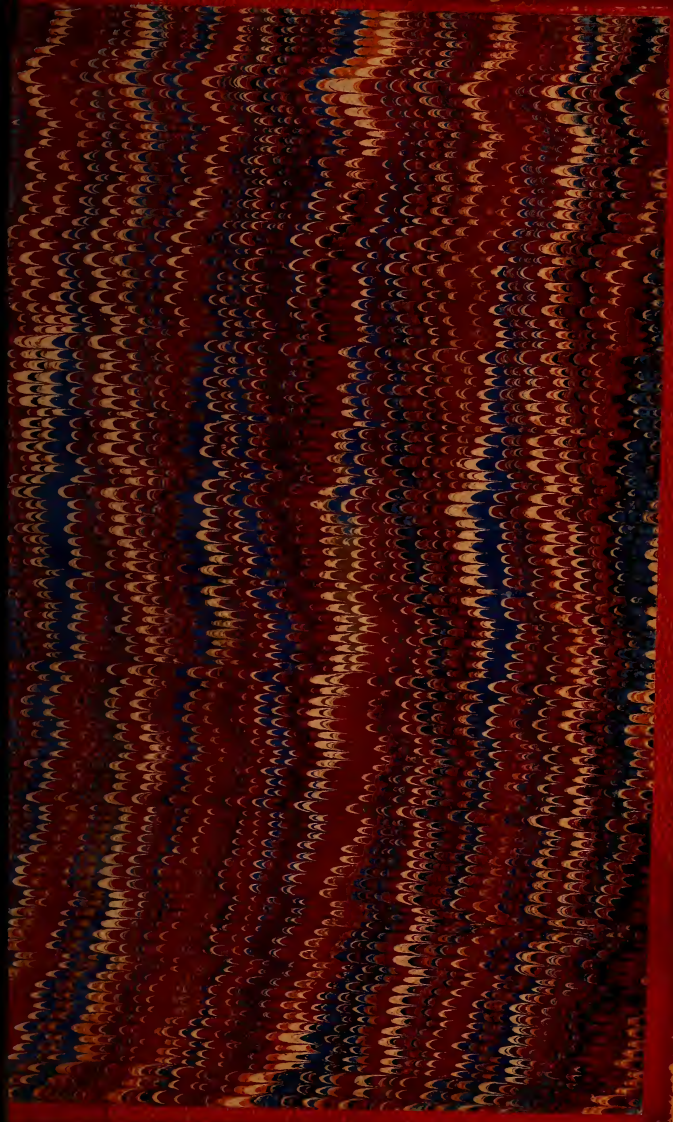












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